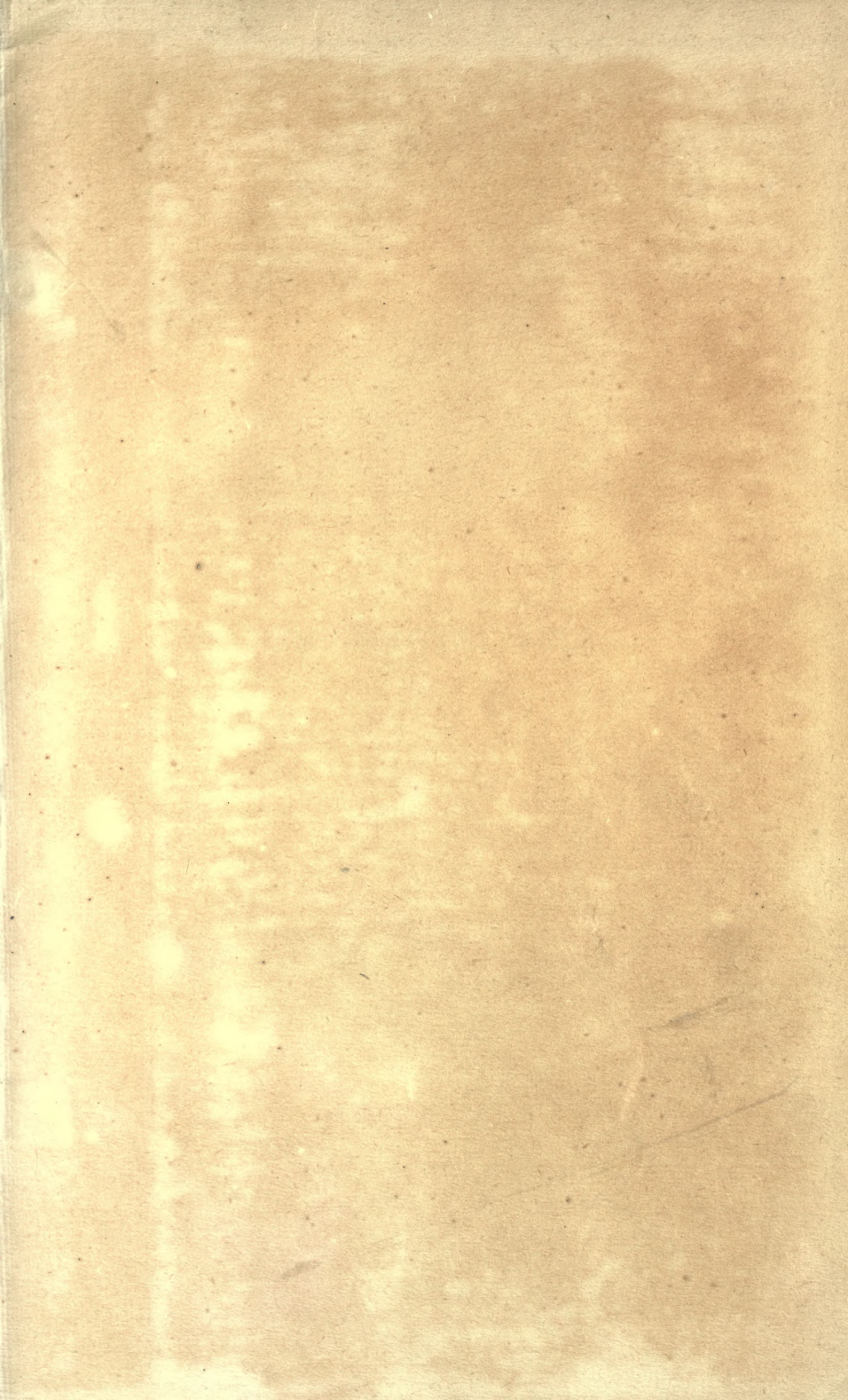






MY SENTIMENTAL SELF





MY TREASURE CORNER

Frontispiece

MY SENTIMENTAL SELF

MRS. ARIA

Background of Sir Henry Irving's Chinese costume.
On the table rest the model of his hand, by E. Oulton
Ford, R.A., graciously lent by Sir Gerald du Maurier;
Irving's holiday hat; Irving's marked copy of King
Richard II.

On the shelf: Irving's bust by Herbert Hampton.
On the wall: Picture of Irving as *Mephistopheles*;
picture of lace collar worn by Edmund Keen in "Hamlet".
On the easel are the handkerchief used by Irving, the
last time he played "The Bells", and the portrait of
H. B. Irving by R. Byes.
On the pedestal: Bust of Mrs. H. B. Irving (Dorothea
Baird) as Trilby, by Francis Bacon.

WALL, LTD.

Background of Sir Henry Irving's Chinese curtain.

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MY SENTIMENTAL SELF

BY
MRS. ARIA

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

FOREWORD BY
STEPHEN McKENNA

LONDON
CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.

1922

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DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
MY BELOVED SISTER
JULIA FRANKAU
(FRANK DANBY).

FOREWORD

WHEN Mr. Samuel Travers Carter was invited to give his truthful opinion of the young Lady Mickleham, he ended with the words: "Those who have been admitted to the enjoyment of her friendship are unanimous in discouraging all others from seeking a similar privilege."

Those who are required to share Mrs. Aria's friendship with any unworthy new arrival that chances to read her reminiscences have declined, almost without exception, to abet her disastrous habit of making new friends. She should be strictly rationed, they feel, if the first comers are to have their just allowance of her gay philosophy and effervescent wit.

The one exception can only defend himself by pleading that she will break down any monopoly that may be established in her friendship. Alternatively, he may argue that, when an introduction is stamped as superfluous, it must also be innocuous: of herself Mrs. Aria says, "I am rapidly becoming amongst treats or penances to the younger generation, which does not even knock at my door but walks straight in. . . . I am a place of entertainment, a point of pilgrimage like St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, or the Zoological Gardens. . . . I am the oldest inhabitant of the stalls, the lady Methuselah on the mat at the Box Offices, and as well known as the Tower of London."

Before she can be profitably introduced, it is necessary, therefore, to find someone to whom Mrs. Aria is not already known. If any have the temerity to confess that they have never identified the author of "Mrs. A.'s Diary," in *Truth*, they will be rewarded by meeting her "sentimental self" in this book. Her older friends will remember that Dolly Mickleham insisted on Mr. Carter's changing his verdict till it read : " Those who have been admitted to the enjoyment of her friendship are unanimous in encouraging all others to seek a similar privilege."

STEPHEN McKENNA.

LINCOLN'S INN,

31 March, 1922.

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Displaying as background Sir Henry Irving's Chinese curtain. On the table rest the model of his hand, by E. Onslow Ford, R.A., graciously lent by Sir Gerald du Maurier; Irving's holiday hat; Irving's marked copy of King Richard II. On the shelf: Irving's bust by Herbert Hampton. On the wall: Picture of Irving as Mephistopheles; picture of lace collar worn by Edmund Kean in "Hamlet." On the easel are the handkerchief used by Irving, the last time he played "The Bells," and the portrait of H. B. Irving by R. Eves. On the pedestal: Bust of Mrs. H. B. Irving (Dorothea Baird) as Trilby, by Francis Bacon.

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“I PITY the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry 'Tis all barren—and so it is; and so is all the world to him who does not cultivate the fruits it offers. I declare, said I, clapping my hands cheerily together, that was I in a desert I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affection.”—LAURENCE STERNE.

MY SENTIMENTAL SELF

CHAPTER I

ABOUT MYSELF IN CHILDHOOD

THERE is much attraction in writing an autobiography by request, and this is commanded by many friends, who seem to imagine that from my garden of memories I shall hand them all handsome bouquets.

There is one forceful objector to the scheme and he is convinced that indiscretion being the better part of biography, I should avoid all temptation to commit it.

"Don't," he said, uplifting his square chin, glaring fiercely prohibitive, while he thrust his fingers through his sturdy crop of hair and asserted with aggressive decisiveness "personalities are vulgar."

I vowed to avoid the contemporary way and I protested that I would dilate neither on the luncheons I had eaten, nor on the lovers I had devoured.

"Don't do it," he reiterated, but the lurking indulgence in his eyes enticed my obstinate optimism to brave his counsel. And it may come to pass that he will prove to have been the one wise man, readers with reviewers uprising to regret that his good advice went by the way of much other.

There was once an American who decided that the ideal old age would be passed reading a book by himself about himself, whilst a capable cook was busy in his kitchen, and a silent servant sat to attention in his ante-room.

Such happening would not be my Canaan, while I embark upon my Odyssey full sail with a garrulity even beyond my age, and a prompt confession that my chronology is of the strong and silent type. I would not tell that age if I knew it, and I give warning at once that I am unable to set down much in malice ; I have so rarely suffered any that I could better sound through my pages a snivelling echo of little Joe, " He was very good to me, he was."

In the sunlight of my joys there have been many to walk beside me, and there is a kindly multitude to sit with me in the shadows.

I venture to plead the excuse for autobiography that my life has so thoroughly interested me it seems worth living over again in the written word. When I look at my inkstand and see " the beaded bubbles winking at the brim," I feel that those inky winks invite the active pen.

And I am gratefully aware that even when I have been but the idle liver of an empty day, the emptiness of that day has heard some bright thing said and seen some dear thing done by others. Like Rupert Brooke's soldier-hero, I have " gone proudly friended "; therefore, of course, I realise the outrageous solecism I commit while indicating " Who's what " amongst my acquaintances.

Expansive biographers of the mighty have not been vivisectors, and death has preceded their commen-

taries, but I make only the slightest sketches, I am the easy impressionist while I stand respectfully in the lesser circle. Moreover, in my autobiography I must be forgiven personalities because of the gregarious germ which is incurably set in me, born I have no doubt in the first moment I opened my eyes to meet those of my nurse. I feel sure I invited her to conversation and that I gurgled a reply to her acquiescent "Was ums."

In contemporary fiction and not without precedent, there is leaning towards the word-photograph, and the romance with a key opens the door to much amusement alike for the friends and the enemies of the lampooned. In accurate presentment of some famous fools or knaves, their gait, gesture, features, or complexions, an injured author may salve his wounds, real or imagined.

From one woman on another with flaccid drab face and bulging pale blue eyes beneath thick crinkling grey hair, such comment as "she looks like a distinguished bad oyster" is a *bonne-bouche* for every digestion.

I will have none of such, but will label honestly those I venture to admire, praise and blame, and I will offer no apology for my egotism born of introspection which reveals characteristics. For characteristics bestow interest on the narrative which depends upon the circumstances where they led.

To begin near the beginning, the atmosphere of my earlier childhood was tainted by the smell of collodion. My father, who had planned for himself a career as an artist, was forced by the demands of a family of nine to become a photographer ; at least he brought

his art and his charm to the task of posing sitters who thronged the studio, which was approached by a narrow bridge from the first floor landing of the house where I was born in Bruton Street. Across this bridge we children were forbidden to wander, and accordingly we wandered, into a dark room of mystery pervaded by the smell of chemicals and an active demon named Martin, who was for ever stirring a stick round a dark fluid in an oblong dish.

Artistic photography was then in its infancy, and my father was amongst the first to nurture it. In boyhood there had been much promise to him of achievement as a painter, and for his needs then he could find a patron to dispense sufficient remuneration for copies of the masterpieces in the National Gallery.

Behind me as I write hangs an example of his skill with an "Assumption" by Murillo: experts have assured me of the ability shown in its colour and its draughtsmanship. On me the picture throws a romantic glamour due to its association with the time of my parents' betrothal, when my mother watched anxiously for the twilight which would curtail my father's industry and hasten their meeting.

My father was remarkably handsome, and my mother adored him for twenty-five years and his memory for a further twenty-five. Always I was jealous and resentful of him; he absorbed so much of her attention, and when, during the last months of his life, she would come down to our breakfast and our early morning prayers, ritual never omitted, for we were reared strictly in the Jewish faith, I was angered at her absent-mindedness, distressed by her

tear-stained eyes and irritated by the persistent " don't make such a noise when you go upstairs for your boots."

Like most young folks, I was as ignorant as intolerant of illness, and the noise of my father's constant cough, and the smell of his inseparable cigar, vexed me, in alliance with the supreme importance attached to his every word and movement. I was impatient of his ways altogether, quick to discern that he was not at all attached to the majority of his children, that he took, indeed, an unbearably critical attitude towards them, and that he was exasperatingly prone to make fun of them.

" Bella," he would say to my mother when he met me and my adored sister Julia on the stairs, " why do those girls look like housemaids ? "

I suspect his twinkling eyes were just enough in their dispraisement : our hands were red, our hair brushed straightly back from foreheads hideously high, and we were pale and dull with nondescript features lacking every attribute of fascination. Children are sensitive to comment, however amusing, and my father was possessed of the humour microbe which later on I tried to claim as inheritance but knew to be the sole property of my brother James, whose earliest certificates from school bore the underlined remark, " A very good boy, but a little too witty."

" Bella, my dear, we must have a house on the river with a sloping lawn," my father would say whilst he contemplated our numbers, and my mother would smile and I, never doubting his sincerity, would grow hurt and sullen with a quick grasp of the hint that I had been marked superfluous.

I hold other special grievances against my father, because during our rare encounters my fear of his ridicule robbed me of thought and speech whilst I wanted desperately to secure his approval. I would prepare a piece to play to him on the piano, and the ceremony of the performance was actual pain to me, and doubtless agony to him. "She must get on with her mathematics" was his sarcastic solace the last time we suffered together from my rendering of a Czerny study.

Again he would baulk me with a sudden recollection that I was accredited with some ability for sums. Indeed I became so expert in algebra that my tutor, Mr. Gilmour, allowed me to help him to set some test papers for the examination of the College of Preceptors. Greatly clever in the schoolroom, I was a shy fool elsewhere. In the dining-room, where we were all marshalled for dessert, and pledged to enjoy cracking and peeling my father's walnuts, he would assail me with the simplest problems and I would fail utterly to arrive at any correct solution. His slightest glance left me dumb and confused and convinced of an incurable stupidity. Yet had I only known him when I was a woman, infallibly I should have shared my mother's devotion to him. I have read some of his beautiful letters to her to learn from them his tenderness and his fun, whilst I recognised his artistic and literary instincts in charming verselets and small drawings which beset his admirable caligraphy. I treasure now a little drawing that he made of my mother when she was sewing baby clothes.

I wish I had understood him earlier, and I envied my eldest sister, Ellen, her chance : I know now I



MY MOTHER

DRAWN BY MY FATHER WHILE SHE WAS SEWING BABY CLOTHES.

To face page 6

should have numbered my father proudly amongst my friends.

But of all his children, he only cared for three, for that daughter Ellen whose mind was attuned to his ; for Florrie, a baby with golden hair and blue eyes ; and for his son James, who, under the name of "Owen Hall," which he selected as suitable to his perennial impecuniosity, became a popular figure in Bohemia.

The family somehow appeared to divide itself into distinct parts. There were Ellen and James at the top ; and at the end Julia—"Frank Danby"—and Eliza, I—who write. Four other members "also ran," and an ante-final effort was Florrie, established as the pretty one, and maintaining the justice of the appellation in her picture by F. Markham Skipworth, which now displays its pale elegance in her country home, where she acts the willing hostess to any member of the new or old generation who may demand rest or recreation.

But it must be admitted that Florrie once fell to the desire of writing, and she published a novel, *The Luddingtons*.

"You are the beauty of the family," we advised her, and she accepted the verdict as condemning the volume to solitude. Now she devotes herself to the growing of fine grandchildren and the planting of rock gardens which blossom always more beautifully as rock gardens will. She married Marcus Collins, one of the best men I ever knew, though he boasts a brusqueness, scarcely rivalled by Carlyle in working hours interrupted by pain or a smoking chimney.

What good M. E. Collins did during the war will never be known, for he will never admit that he did anything, but so far as was in him as architect, man

and citizen he was lavish in the giving. Beyond the years of active service at the Front, he was the man who stayed at home to help to adapt many buildings to hospital needs, slaving at plans while bereft of all assistance, son and daughters alike in uniform, and clerks in the field.

But if I would retain his regard "the rest is silence," broken by the ticking of the forty old clocks whose collection in perfect striking order is amongst his peace hobbies, deplored ungratefully enough by his guests.

Julia and I, inseparable pair, showed our propensities before our first decade had sped, when I would babble of pantomimes and dress, proving my efficiency in trimming a hat or frocking a fairy doll, and she would be at a table aloof, scribbling and re-scribbling little stories, wherein I was queen of romance and she was a lady-in-waiting on literature.

Amongst her most cherished "howlers" perpetrated then was her comment on an eight in a boat race.

"All rowed fast, but none so fast as our hero."

Julia has been known to express an opinion, that my devotion to the drama and to dress will find me in old age an established favourite at a lunatic asylum, where I think I am Autolycus, and I dangle ribbons to make and unmake the same hat. I wonder! anyhow my love of theatres and of clothes yet exists, and her first ambition to write lasted throughout her too short years, even unto their heroic close, and her dying achievement of *Twilight*, when her three sons were in khaki.

Julia and I walked together, learnt together, talked together, and slept together in a large double bed, and

her tale-telling ambitions were confided to me from the age of seven.

"Say good night to each other and go to sleep quickly," was Mother's formula, hopefully delivered.

Not a chance of such proceeding; Julia told me tales until midnight, and even then I murmured greedily, "Go on!"

Our daily school, where boys and girls were received, was conducted by a Miss Belisario, and under her guidance many Jews, Jessels, Mocattas, Sebags and Montefiores, all present-time magnates, took with us their first lessons.

Miss Belisario was a Jewess of the most rigid kind, a severe disciplinarian regarding the traditions of our faith as sacrosanct, and incidentally allotting to me a prize for reciting the ten commandments in Hebrew. I wish now that I could remember them to faithful observance even in English.

"Young ladies, don't laugh but say the blessing," she would urge with uplifted hand when she entered the classroom, her brown wig well awry, to hear us tittering during a thunderstorm. She was a stern and stupendous figure, and reported to have written to upbraid Charles Dickens for allotting the thief Fagin to the Jewish race.

By the way, this course was followed by a number of Jews, and in Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens* he speaks of the benevolent old Jew in *Our Mutual Friend* being presented as an unconscious agent of a rascal, in order to wipe out the reproach against his Jew in *Oliver Twist*.

The daily walk to our school initiated the order of pocket-money, and Julia bought jumbles at three a

penny to give two of these to Eliza, who devoured a large bun entirely on her own account. I find in this trifling incident the initial letter to the whole alphabet of Julia's existence so far as I was concerned : two-thirds of her jumbles—and many came to her lot—were always for Eliza.

I think no literary dedication more touching in its exaggeration than hers to me on the fly-leaf of her novel, *Concert Pitch*.

“ Dearest, you said recently that I had never dedicated a book to you, and you said it as if you were a little hurt that I had withheld the slight compliment. Take this one then, it is no worse, perhaps better than some of the others. You read it in synopsis and manuscript ; without your sympathy and encouragement it would certainly have been less adequate, but does not this hold good for all I do ? It seems to me

‘ There is no word of all my songs,
But unto thee belongs.’

“ FRANK DANBY.”

I go back to Frank Danby in the making, as at all times and circumstances I would, to justify our mother's conviction, “ If Eliza is satisfied with Julia, and Julia is satisfied with Eliza, there is of course nothing left to be desired.” Those words came to play the prophetic part as the gospel of my life.

My school-days ended barren to me of the least knowledge, except those forgotten ten commandments ; and our education was rendered into the hands of Mr. Gilmour and Madame Paul Lafargue, the eldest daughter of Karl Marx.

Paul Lafargue, Editor of the *Cri du People*, was undergoing imprisonment for some ultra-socialistic article. I forget the exact circumstances, but I know how fortunate we should have considered ourselves in its result.

Madame Lafargue was a most remarkable and interesting personality, never failing to reiterate her opinion that we were of an abysmal ignorance which she could never hope to plumb.

Whilst Julia, however, endeavoured earnestly to atone, and under Madame Lafargue this should have been easily possible, I became more and more frivolous, taking heed only of Madame's beauty, of her elegance, of her auburn Pompadour, her slim grace and the quick cadences of her French. The sad circumstances which led to her fate to instruct two such unworthy little girls concerned me not at all; but she must have loved her husband very dearly, upholding his cause with unswerving devotion, for when, as preacher of an unwanted doctrine, he fell again within the arm of a relentless law, and incurable illness threatened with incurable poverty, she decided to avoid all further efforts in the oblivion of death, which they sought together.

I am conscious that about the time of her leaving us the whole circumstances of our lives changed, our tutor was dismissed and practically our education ceased.

My father died while puffing at a cigar my mother had lighted for him; and, speaking his last words, "You always know what I want, darling," made summary of the blessed marriage.

The note of gaiety in our house was hushed to com-

plete silence, and there came great difficulties about means, so that the enterprising Julia went forth to work at any obtainable task, and found, as the earnest seekers ever will, some outlet for her energy in the accomplishment of Church embroidery, and addressing envelopes for a Necropolis Company, whilst I followed my unchangeable course of idleness, interrupting this only by taking classes in dressmaking and millinery for the exclusive benefit of myself.

Through James, married now, came all our pleasures, and I could write a whole book with him in the forefront. He was a god of my early idolatry by reason of his unvaried amiability to us. He would bring boxes of chocolates, seats for a theatre, and an offer of a day at the races. I suspect he was sorry for our dull time; certainly he endeavoured to enliven things.

We had, however, as few duties as pleasures, but like all the young Jews of that period, we were taught to show great respect to our elders, and these included an uncle who belonged to the Galsworthy-Forsyth type, and two aunts, bred on different sides of the house. Uncle was a tremendous fellow, with ginger whiskers and an absorbing interest in himself. He rarely spoke of anyone else. He used always to announce to his wife Sophia, "If either of us dies, I shall go and live in Paris."

His megalomania was splendid in its perfection. "I have just heard poor A—— is ill. I must send my footman round to enquire."

"Bella," he would dictate to my mother, "how are you this morning? I am feeling very well. You are looking rather pale. Why don't you walk? I walk, that is the secret of my health. Walk, Bella, walk,"

and he walked off, dying in middle age, so far as I can remember, and I have not much desire to know whether he walked up or down.

But the aunts were far more interesting, and they were visited to order on alternate Saturdays, Saturday afternoon being the great visiting time for all of us, who punctually attended the Synagogue in the morning.

Both aunts were possessed of unforgettable attributes, the one related to my mother being of the stern aspect, deeply religious, and widely charitable. She lived in magnificent state at a mansion with extensive grounds in St. John's Wood, now given over to a hospital.

All about her evinced wealth, dignity and an exalted outlook on duty. A whole wing of her establishment was devoted to her old mother, who with much ceremony would occasionally grant us audience and, as any Pope might, would bless us solemnly on dismissing us from her presence.

Aunt had a large family of children ; a score had been granted to her, and but half a dozen translated, while the surviving " young ladies " had their own carriage and their own coachman, and also to our greater content a capital croquet lawn and a monster dolls' house replete with all the luxuries.

Notwithstanding the atmosphere of decorum and divine grace, we passed some very merry hours up there with them in St. John's Wood, and " the young ladies " and myself often foregather now to talk of them.

Aunt No. 2 was a sister of my father's, and of a strikingly beautiful personality despite her forty-five years. She lived in a huge house in Bayswater, and

dressed always in satin, black or purple, whilst over her hair she draped a veil of white Limerick lace which fell to the ground at the back, and was caught tightly under her chin to her ears with diamond-framed topaz brooches. Her mittened white fingers were covered with rings, and her cheeks were not quite innocent of rouge.

"You would look much better without all that stuff upon your face," expostulated her brother, and she would answer sapiently :

"You haven't seen me without it."

She was a very amusing woman, and Julia and I were always very glad to find ourselves with her. She used to tell us many anecdotes about her servants, about Maria "who was a very bad cook, but made excellent button-holes"; also of Brown, her rather sad and faded manservant, never seen without white cotton gloves.

He had the manners of a dancing master, would enter the room with three steps to the right, three steps to the left, and three up the centre to deposit a tea-tray blazing in brightest silver in front of my imperious aunt, who would signal to him for her high satin footstool, and brush him aside until she was ready for him to pirouette around with the filled tea-cups.

Once at a dinner-party after a tremendous crash had been heard outside the door, he distinguished himself by approaching her with a deep bow, and whispered words of comfort—"Only a few *dirty* plates, madam."

CHAPTER II

ABOUT MY GIRLHOOD AND MY BROTHER JAMES

I HAVE seldom indulged in the popular habit of consulting the advertising fortune-tellers, but someone of the less rigid outlook tempted me to visit an oracle, who was proving his right to illegal guineas, somewhere near the Strand.

His room was full and dark, and his method was to demand some personal possession, purse or gloves, or such-like, and then deliver the verdict.

To my amazement and denial at that time, this gentleman-in-office, whilst returning to me my handkerchief, muttered with his eyes half shut, "Writing, writing, writing, I can see nothing around you but writing."

I cannot explain this, and never could, but there was some strange fate at work to direct three members of an ordinary family of commonplace birth, education and environment towards the literary path.

James was definitely responsible for Julia's first venture when he started his newspaper *Pan*, and brought to our house Oscar and Willie Wilde, and one Alfred Thompson, who was well known then as master of theatrical dress, with a special leaning towards the ballet and a singular dexterity of fingers with which he could illustrate many dancing steps.

Oscar Wilde was a slender stripling, inclining towards fat only in the face, and I would sit and gaze at him

with his chin in his hand, in silent wonder at his strange slow utterances, while I respected, with no notion what it implied, that "He had won the Newdigate."

How impressed I was with his soliloquy, all unintelligible as it was to me, on a girl he had met at six o'clock in the morning in Covent Garden Market.

"She carried a large bunch of lilies. How beautiful you are! I murmured, and she passed by in silence. How beautiful."

Both Oscar Wilde and Willie Wilde became frequent visitors, and in a public garden which spread its ill-kept lumpish lawn behind our dwelling we often played tennis together: Willie in a shirt showing some desire to be divorced from the top of his trousers, and Oscar in a high hat with his frock-coat tails flying and his long hair waving in the breeze.

Julia's attempt at a parody of a villanelle by Oscar Wilde which had appeared in *The World* led to an interview with Edmund Yates, who found in it some excuse for encouraging her to take up writing as a career.

It is a coincidence that her first published lines should have owed their existence to Oscar Wilde, and that her novel *The Sphinx's Lawyer* had the same inspiration, twenty-eight years having elapsed between-whiles.

Julia dedicated *The Sphinx's Lawyer* to James.

"Because you hate and loathe my book and its subject, knowing all the violence of your antipathy which can be summed up in a sentence, 'Such a career is outside the region of art.'"

As the paper *Pan* went to popularity and thence through an inexperienced direction to death, my

brother started, owned and edited in turn *The Bat*, *The Cuckoo* and *The Phoenix*, whilst writing industriously for *The Sporting Times* many paragraphs on the road to racing, and dramatic criticisms under the signature "Stalled Ox." He distilled the spirit of *camaraderie* at Romano's, imbibing some more at Curzon Street, where he gathered around him all the brightest wits of the gay Press and the gayer boards. There were pretty ladies of high and low degree, fine gentlemen with fine mortgages, famous heroes of the oar, trainers and distrainers, lords and their honourable brothers, and dramatists with and without poetry to their equipment, to provide a small romantic leaven.

James's wife received them all with an equal geniality. The passports to these wonderful parties were beauty and humour. Without these you were not welcome nor indeed appropriate. Reginald Shirley Brooks, possessed of both, profiting little by either, was always in evidence with many more connected with John Corlett, Newnham Davies the prize epicure, and Goldberg, known as "the Shifter," and Pottinger Stephens.

Labouchere, Arthur Anderson and his brother Percy, who later illustrated my most inadequate book on Costume, Cecil Raleigh, Herman Vezin, Ernest Wells (Swears), with oddments of different reputations all crowd upon my mind, pervaded with hilarity, good fellowship, good wine and good jokes not streaked with blue or mauve, but allied to an exchange of confidences; the popular fable of the shilling-in-the-pocket millionaire competing for credulity with tales of the play or book achieved in a single night.

The youth and inexperience of Julia and myself

rendered us outside the pale, but we were permitted to intrude sometimes with strict injunctions to leave at eleven, when the more violent delights of the assembly might create in us a false conception of its artistic purpose.

I remember being there one night, on sufferance as usual, and more or less ill at ease through my inability to contribute anything towards the entertainment. I was wondering whether it would not be better to go home supperless, when my attention was caught and held by a tall figure standing aloof with pallid face, red hair falling lankly over a high forehead, and man's eternal interrogatory in his light blue eyes.

Whence had he come to this banquet of careless wits? I pondered as I glanced at him inquisitively, and questioned James to a rapid explanation.

"Oh, that is George Moore, an Irishman from Paris."

It was daring in those days, even improper for any but the indigenous to live in Paris.

"Rather a swell out there," James continued whilst he looked across at him affectionately. "He matters with the Art and Literature lot, haunts cafés, is a boon companion of Manet, thinks a deal of Zola and is pals with de Goncourt, liable at any moment to talk about him or even about Victor Hugo. I don't think he has written much himself, but he will."

It was obvious that George Moore's silence was not due to dullness and that he would have little wish to speak to me, and I wanted so badly to speak to someone.

Cecil Raleigh, hovering in my neighbourhood, appeared likely to be a more suitable objective, and I had known him in the early days of *Pan*, so I ventured,

rudely enough, to express to him my distaste for mixed company and my cherished conviction that the universe had been created for the better classes of fastidious prejudice.

He upturned the ends of his fat moustache defiantly, and tucking his thin cigarette to the uttermost corner of his mouth, sniffed his characteristic sniff, and patting my shoulder in the paternal tense, ordered—

“Don’t be a fool, my girl, Socialism is the religion of the future.”

Many times I have heard my father say as he passed James’s hat upon the hall table, “The head of a size to fit that, can have no brains.” But he was wrong, James was a very clever man with just a human weakness or so to mar a triumphant career.

He would admit candidly that money was his great stumbling-block; he could never manage money. Possessed of an erratic temperament and considerable generosity, no matter how much he earned, he declared he had never been out of debt “since he left school owing 2s. 9d. to the sweet shop.”

I am convinced someone else had the sweets, for someone else was for ever eating all James’s sweets.

He adventured on many fields—legal, political, sporting, literary and theatrical, but he always came to the same uncomfortable conclusion that he had not enough money, and he never suspected this state to be due to his super-liberality. As a lawyer he gave advice freely to his friends; as a racehorse owner he indulged his prodigal proclivities in the world of hangers-on; during his editorial and play-writing epochs he was lavish in his hospitality and in his benevolence towards his comrades, while his search for “copy” through the

door of conviviality led him inevitably down Carey Street way.

He declared there was too much civilisation in England for any but millionaires, and he voiced his belief that he "had enjoyed every experience except death and solvency."

I, who loved him, know that he fell quite unwillingly into bankruptcy, although when passing through the attendant vexations he reported with characteristic irreverence—

"Now I know that my Receiver liveth."

My mother, arousing herself from her misery to console his depressed moments, would shroud his weakness beneath her unfailing love, and would even prove her unfaltering belief in him by making efforts to go to the rehearsals of his plays where she would listen with all credulity to his confidence in the fine characters of his heroines when off the stage.

She was very modern, that brave mother of ours, and broad-minded beyond her period. She would smile confidently at James's declarations of Miss X's complete excellence.

"She's so good, mother," he would emphasise when there was no doubt whatever as to the standard of attained virtue. More accurately James adjudged this when he wrote later as a curtain line which never failed to secure the laugh of its intention, "How good, bad women are!"

I chuckle in remembrance of another subtle jest of his when a clumsy Blanche was on the terpsichorean track :

"Let us come and *hear* her dance," he would say.



MY BROTHER, JAMES DAVIS (OWEN HALL)

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Another *bon mot* worth the record :

"James," asked a beauty with an eye to business, "I want my portrait painted ; which artist would do me justice ? "

He replied promptly with a conciliatory grin, "Louis Wain is the right man, nobody better, my dear."

Growing to some scepticism of the disinterestedness of the darlings of the gods, he would describe an actress as "a girl who stands on the same board every evening thinking spitefully of the manager who pays her salary."

James was responsible for some attempts to uplift the form and dialogue of musical comedy.

The Gaiety Girl was the first of his series of recognised successes which proceeded to include *The Artist's Model*, *The Greek Slave*, *The Geisha*, *Floradora*, *The Girl from Kay's* and half a dozen others, with *Sergeant Brue*, which had the advantage of music by Liza Lehmann, a gifted artist who hangs on the line in my gallery of splendid women.

I sent James a new novel once with the query, "Don't you think this would make a play ? "

"I am sure it would, and a damned dull one," he made answer.

He was not "a little too witty," but witty enough to render his companionship supremely desirable. I obtained it gleefully for a short visit to Eastbourne, when, after running to catch the train, I flung myself panting into a corner of the carriage to gasp :

"You can write the paragraph which shall announce, 'She was found dead with twopence in bronze in her pocket.' "

"Wouldn't be true," he laughed ; " I should have taken the twopence."

" Life's a jest,
And all things show it.
I thought so once,
And now I know it."

are lines upon Gay's monument in Westminster Abbey. James was pursued by jokes even to the grave, where on the day of his funeral amongst the piled-up flowers was a large open book of violets with snowdrops—writing, " Alas ! poor Yorick."

" I never knew his name was Yorick," said a loving chorus girl as she stooped to read this.

James died over-young, leaving to the merry-makers a legacy of quips generally quoted without inverted commas.

It is many years ago, but to me there is an abiding sense of the loss of him ; he was a dear fellow possessed of an inexhaustible store of chivalrous affection for women, and his mother stood to him for ever as the best of these.

Our poor mother ! She would say that she wished she had never had us taught to write, the desire being inspired as much by James's tendency towards libel, as by my sister Julia's publication of *Dr. Phillips*, which fluttered the dovescotes of Maida Vale, rattled the skeletons in the cupboards and the stout ladies at the card-tables, but never merited the popular suspicion that the hero was taken from life.

Many uneventful gaieties of our sheltered girlhood had come and gone when at a party given in the neighbourhood there shone a most delightful vision, a

slim young girl with chestnut hair enwrapped in a scarlet silken cap, with bright brown eyes deep-set with that pathetic appeal which never fails to find answer in the heart of man.

That little girl was Mary Moore, now to be recognised as Lady Wyndham, widow of Sir Charles Wyndham, the finest comedian who has stepped upon the stage in my time, to intone the whole scale of love-making with the varied notes inflected by a convincing sincerity which brooked no denial.

On that first occasion of our meeting Mary Moore was asked to sing, and sang a comic song entitled "Did you ever see an oyster walk upstairs?" How Mary Moore has followed the example of that ascending bivalve and walked upstairs to the top; how she went on the stage and through the introduction of his sister Mrs. Bronson Howard was brought to Charles Wyndham, ultimately becoming his leading lady and business partner after many trials and troubles bravely endured, is an oft-told tale, though few tell it accurately.

"As if anybody knew the whole truth about anything," but so far as regards Mary Moore I may be written down as an exception to this rule of the uninformed informer because she and I have been firm friends and close neighbours the greater part of our lives.

When she was about sixteen she married James Albery, doubtless impelled by an appreciation of his superior intelligence and education. I came across them together one Christmas Eve when we sat round the fireside of a mutual friend, and she gazed at him with gleaming, worshipping eyes, whilst he told won-

derful ghost stories of his imaginative weaving, and right well he told them too! With admiration I have seen Mary Moore bring up to successful manhood the three clever sons of James Albery, working industriously and always more industriously to improve herself in the art of acting, to capture astutely the best principles of theatrical management, to gauge the public taste, to realise the righteous ways to promote her own aims and the good of a profession which now holds her gratefully as the President of its Benevolent Association.

That little brown-eyed girl with no fortune save her artless charm has not attained easily to her present position, and no one who has not enjoyed an intimacy with her can appreciate how much in toil and tears she has paid for it, nor understand with what unselfishness she gave herself up to shield Sir Charles Wyndham from harm or unhappiness during his last days when he fell to incapability on the saddest side of that dread disease, aphasia.

But in the long years I have happy recollections of them both, and I was often their guest at supper parties in the famous yacht room with portholes set low round the walls, and at Hyde Park Hotel, where Wyndham held tremendous receptions of the exalted in the world of society which adored him.

Further proof of Sir Charles Wyndham's good-will towards me came when I was asked to write some press paragraphs for him, and he, while paying me an excellent salary for my work, steadfastly avoided any opportunity to give me the material for its construction. He turned any business meeting with me into the more congenial channel of mere gossip on

lighter things, with a tea accompaniment. However, I was very pleased to be invited to endeavour to exhilarate by my fun a dull scene in a comedy he hoped to present. In consultation over this we spent two hours whilst he taught me the necessity for the short sentence in stage dialogue ; but he decided against the work altogether, and sent me £50 for his lesson. It was inevitable that I should try to write a play, and Wyndham with Mary Moore approved a one-scene effort, *The Runaways*, which, however, illness prevented them from acting, but in the cause of some charity Sydney Brough and Gertrude Kingston came to the rescue of my dashed hopes, and I like to record how much I found the dramatist can owe to the actors. Every little jest I had made was magnified by their art into some importance. I had delivered duds and they were transformed into human beings, while their "business," omitted through my ignorance from the scrip, invested the scene with a lively reality to create laughter throughout and to lead to many demands for more presentations, uniformly gratis !

Gertrude Kingston was the first woman in London to build a theatre for herself. It was under her direction that The Little Theatre which was to combine the advantages of the small hall with those of the playhouse was erected. But it proved one of the instances when fortune did not favour the brave and the fair, and many vicissitudes have since shown that Gertrude Kingston had set herself an impracticable task. Rather an amusing incident during the early days of my friendship with Gertrude Kingston led to my introduction to her husband, a very handsome fellow, Captain Silver.

On the first night of *The Manœuvres of Jane* I felt a hand tightly grasping my knee, and I heard an emphasised "Darling" in my ear.

"Unhand me, sir, and how dare you!" being the conventional acceptance of such conduct, I did not offer it, but stared at the offender who was quick to repentance.

"I beg your pardon, but she has just come on the stage. Gertrude Kingston is my wife, and I was thinking aloud about her; do forgive me."

"Suit the action to the word and the word to the action," I laughed in recognising his complete ingenuousness, and we chatted amicably through the entr'acte.

Charles Wyndham wrote in my autograph book, "A good woman is an understudy for an angel," and he forgave me my thanks underlined with "Do you call her often for rehearsal."

CHAPTER III

ABOUT MY MARRIAGE AND ADVENTURE INTO JOURNALISM

MY first meeting with Mary Moore is amongst my vivid memories before Julia and I married. Julia was fortunate in securing for her husband Arthur Frankau, the ideal gentleman, whose unchangeable love, trust and devotion were proved in their last testimony, "To my beloved wife Julia I leave everything I die possessing."

My own marriage, brought about by my desolation at Julia's, was not what even my exaggerated optimism can write down a success.

I have always had the desire to spend money ; luxuries, superfluous to the apostles of simplicity, were, and I may add, are to me the absolute necessities of existence.

I do not want to wait until May for my strawberries, and I cannot read or write in a room that has not the right carpets, furniture and pictures surrounded by flowers.

I must be well dressed, imitation lace on my underclothes makes me unhappy, and when my silken petticoats are not Milanese, and my stockings and shoes not of the highest birth, I feel a sense of personal unworthiness that disturbs my outlook.

Being uncomfortable myself, I become irritable and unjust towards others, no longer amiable, tolerant and courteous, but anarchical, suspicious and ill-mannered.

Such being my mental calibre, and circumstances after my marriage having been propitious, it may easily be understood I did not accept with equanimity the news that my husband's business matters were seriously involved and our means reduced practically to a *minus* quantity.

Then I thought myself injured. Now I know I was only selfish. Certainly I felt nothing in David Aria's life so well became him as his leaving me for South Africa five years after I had driven with him from the Synagogue to hear his first rapture expressed in, "I wonder what has won the Lincoln Handicap." My David danced and gambled before the Ark.

We spent our honeymoon at Shanklin, where he read and re-read the morning papers to their final advertisement, and then watched for the evening papers to obtain news of the latest prices. I was very bored, longing to return to Julia and my mother, to put my house in order and to finish sewing some Arabian curtains I destined for the *portière*. Graves in the Isle of Wight running over with forget-me-nots haunt me as symbols of much that was and more that followed.

Had I been older or of more serious thought I could perhaps have guided my husband into some harbour of safety, but I always ignored wilfully any hint of trouble, and we were only boy and girl together with little of real love between us. His main attraction for

me had been his dark Southern eyes, his gentle voice, his slenderness and his cheerfulness ; mine for him doubtless was no better based.

I soon found him slender in many ways, in intellect and in integrity, and even had I been wiser nothing that I might have urged could have upset his fatal belief that he knew which horse would come in first, whilst he was confirmed in an immovable faith in the protected sparrow fable, a faith which led him so often and so hopefully to take our goods to the pawnbroker.

“ Who put it in ?
Little Tommy Green.
Who took it out ?
Little Billie Stout.”

But alas ! my husband never played the part of little Billie Stout, yet I would admit that he was quite amiable and invariably sober, I would ignore his fitful fidelity with his careless calculations, I would chronicle his joyous disposition, his kindness and his dexterity in filling a hot-water bottle.

When disaster came his idea was—I must in fairness grant him an idea—that we should sell the house and its contents and live in apartments whilst he looked for another opening for his talents.

I knew what that meant, for I had a cousin who had been looking for an opening for twenty years and living upon the family all the time, the family making an allowance as small as it could, and always threatening to reduce this when a *chef* gave notice or a tailor sent in a bill. I knew the difficulties which beset a man once off the line ; that he has failed in his own business no matter for what cause is no recom-

mendation to him when he wants to manage someone else's.

I insisted that a temporary separation would give me a better chance of re-establishing us together. I am glad to remember that neither of us upbraided the other, but held discussions with absolute good humour upon the date of the division which took place a few weeks later when, with many demands for his early return and several embraces, I saw him off to the Cape, and came back to my flat to find it in occupation of a seedy apologetic individual demanding £29 12s. with an alternative suggestion of a prolonged residence with me.

I was alert to the novel experience of such an acquaintance, becoming at once the pleasant hostess with an offer of whisky and soda.

"I don't want to be in your way," he deprecated, "because I was boot boy where your husband went to school, and he was such a nice fellow, always ready with his shilling; I wish you would just settle this account and let me go."

I buckled on my brass-plated armour of bravado. "Certainly not, and you can have no right here, the contents of these rooms are mine."

"You must prove that, mum."

"I will telegraph to my lawyer."

He grew kinder and kinder and more confidential as I poured out a second and a third whisky, and urged him to a seat and a cigarette.

"I shouldn't send no wires," he advised, "there ain't no good in letting the post office people know about your affairs, you can go and see your lawyer and I'll sit quiet in the kitchen till you come back."

Splendid specimen of a man in possession, where, however, he was not permitted to remain. My horrified mother, shocked at the outrage, fetched the experienced James who boasted an intimacy with every bailiff in the metropolis.

"Ike, you scoundrel, how dare you annoy my sister," and the ever-ready purse ignoring the just bill and all against the law promptly produced a sovereign to deport a grateful invader.

My story got round, as such stories will, and dear conventional relations came to condole with me in my sad unprotected position with a little girl to keep, doubtless suspecting me of heartlessness when I smiled the reassurance that I could look after both of us. Every woman can look after herself until she likes the man who likes her.

My friends arrived in mournful numbers, miscalculated to my deliberate attitude of a full comprehension of my husband's schemes, even of my approval of these and my confidence of his reappearance with a fortune.

I refused to be the pathetic object for commiseration. I would not become the fashionable form of philanthropy. I was cheaper than a fancy bazaar, and more amusing than a charity concert. I protested I should enjoy my freedom and profit by it. I anticipated with satisfaction an opportunity to cast off the burden of debts deep-hedged in falsehood which had threatened to make a happy existence impossible.

"Amuse me, praise me, help me, but do not pity me," I felt as I spoke with no rancour towards circumstances which had sent my best household gods to dwell beneath the gleam of three balls, and I was sure

that no man's hand was against me and that my wilderness would blossom with opportunities. I might be a Tea Association? I might keep a bonnet shop? I might become a manicurist? a saleswoman? or a typist? But as it happened I followed none of these courses, going swiftly along the road indicated by the sign-post "To writing." I was happy enough in my confidence to find some means to live, although often when noting the labours of others I had declared I could never earn sixpence. I have been able to earn many sixpences, but the first were due to a misdirected letter intended for my sister Julia already guiding her pen to profit.

"DEAR MADAM,

We shall be very glad to hear from you as to your willingness to contribute weekly to the new journal, *Jewish Society*.

Yours faithfully,

THE MANAGER."

The error was hailed as from Providence, but I bucked shyly at the start, so Julia to prod me wrote the first article and shamed me to effort when the cheque reached me. A couple of weeks later I was filling the allotted columns to the satisfaction of a not too exacting editor, whose low standard no doubt cost him and his supporters a thousand pounds or so.

I wrote to my husband regularly for six years; his rare replies assured me of his content, of his belief in better things to come and the unsatisfactory condition of the weather. My last communication was returned

marked "gone away," and I do not recall that I ever gave him another serious thought until sixteen years later when, as plaintiff, I stood up in the Divorce Court to identify his photograph whilst marvelling that I could ever have imagined I cared for him. How foolish was the judge who, after considering my case with the information that my delay in instituting it had occurred through a regard for the welfare of my only daughter just married, awarded me release "with the custody of the child."

To chance I owed my further literary advance under the ægis of Julia, who had been summoned to the office of *The Gentlewoman* to discuss a series of articles on "Medicos under the Microscope."

Whilst she was arguing with J. S. Wood, the editor, about the best victims for her purpose, A. J. Warden, the business manager, no doubt appreciating the cut of my coat and the angle of my hat, interrogated, "Don't you know anything to write about?"

I hazarded pertly "Dress and drama with drivell sauce," and I was engaged at once to serve these, remaining on the staff of *The Gentlewoman* for a long time, whilst Willie Wilde acted as stand-by to deliver prose or poem immediately to order, and Malcolm Salaman contributed his kindly views of "Woman under a Man's Eyeglass." Julia duly discoursed on Doctors and Children, Mrs. J. E. Panton threw some new light into the darkest domestic basements, and a lady of swarthy complexion advised on the best use of cosmetics under a pen-name of Venus de Milo, her large dark eyes, bad manners and drawling accent suggesting Venus of Mile End as a more suitable signature.

I confess audaciously that my first contributions were written entirely by Malcolm Salaman, who is now the best recognised expert on all the graphic arts in all their states.

He was an untiring friend to me, and I was ever a glad taker of service. He was so anxious to show his sympathy with my poor circumstances that to improve these he not alone learnt to spell *passementerie* but to report its beaded proceedings in persuasive paragraphs. With his help I got along fairly well towards my main goal of a decent salary, A. J. Warden educating me on the commercial side of newspapers, and the value of a personal visit to lead via the attractive notice of the salesman's wares to revenue for the advertisement department.

J. S. Wood and I never became friends, and he would close an eye and cock his head slightly on one side when I protested that he did not like me, while he admitted :

"I am always impressed by the idea that whatever you are doing and you do very well you are getting the best of us." But before I left J. S. Wood I had learnt to realise the justice of his reputation as "a capital man at the turnstile." He was indeed the ideal keeper at the gate which opens to the field of philanthropy, and no one worked harder than he for the extension of the Irish industries, and it is to his indefatigable energies we owe the Children's *salon* which has endowed many cots in many hospitals. When our connection was severed he gave me a written certificate of merit, but he omitted the tributary tray which was so blatantly my due.

I worked very hard supplying as many as twelve

thousand words a week and travelling round the town to collect details for these. I believe that my friendly irrelevant methods of interviewing buyers and managers did something to revolutionise what was known as Dress and Shop Journalism.

Once I ventured to deliver a lecture to other writers on fashion with a financial end. I insisted upon the importance of these approaching with respect, if at all, the subject of dress. I urged them to recognise that they must serve God and Mammon, the editor and the advertiser. I entreated a consideration for the laws of syntax, recommending some study of Debrett in case efficiency and presentable clothes should land them at court in Society to some misplacement of titles. Finally I hoped that their language and their information might be accepted alike by the lenient grammarian, the ambitious milliner and the imposing Chamberlain, perorating proudly with "Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's and let Cæsar's wife be above suspicion of velveteen if she is wearing velvet."

After such a *tour de force* I acquired the arbitrary attitude, and, rebelling against any restrictions, accepted an invitation to edit the fashion pages of *Hearth and Home*.

While thus employed under the roof of Messrs. Beeton & Co. in Fetter Lane I first came across Arnold Bennett. We jostled each other in the doorway of his passage to the editorial chair in the office of *Woman*, a successful penny weekly dispensing much instruction in the arts of beauty, conduct and cooking, with little sops to the taste of the multitude in short stories of avowed fiction and shorter anecdotes of avowed facts.

Arnold Bennett's personality struck me at once ; although of nervous, fidgety movements, twisting his watch-chain and tossing back an errant lock of thick dark hair, he was a solid figure impressively slow of speech, yet of an arresting power in each utterance.

I should say as I think of him, that forceful concentration was his prevailing characteristic, although his fine brown eyes held other significance, and his job was to edit *Woman*.

He tells me now that he asked me to contribute to his paper and that I haggled over his price. I don't believe a word of this accusation, for I never mentioned money, and I am sure I should have jumped at the chance of working for him. I know I should have found him, as someone wrote of someone else, "upright in his praise, downright in his blame and all right in his methods." A struggler on the far outskirts of the literary way could not have failed to push forwards with Arnold Bennett's encouragement to guide her.

Except that the thick dark locks are crested with silver, I thought him little changed when recently I greeted him in his spacious flat at Hanover Square, where many wide rooms come to typical conclusion in the atmosphere of *The Old Wives' Tale*, accurately registered on chiffonier, horsehair-seated chairs, lustre ornaments and repp curtains. I believe Arnold Bennett grows younger and younger, and it is good to hear account of him as expert yachtsman and to know "he is first in the ballroom and last to leave it, and he dances supremely well."

He would, he always does everything supremely

well, even the generous giving of his excellent photograph I craved for my later pages.

Whilst I was working for *Hearth and Home* I conceived the notion that I must possess and edit a journal of my own. Thus came into existence the monthly magazine known as *The World of Dress*, destined of course to show all other editors how fashion papers should be conducted.

Rabid reformer I thought myself, and fell as rabid reformers will, to pursue the very policy I uprose to condemn.

A friendly syndicate was mustered, and much pecuniary assistance came from Harry H. Marks, who was then a potential figure in finance with a fancy for starting newspapers. When he promised to support mine, he made the strict proviso that he was not to be mentioned in connection with it, that he would have no shares and no thanks. He protested cynically that perhaps I should never speak ill of him and that this restraint should be his reward. He was an odd fellow, brilliantly clever, with a determination to fight everybody and win everything; anxious to be misunderstood and attaining fully this ambition. In his last years a long illness left him at the mercy of many enemies he had benefited, but none could ever deny his courage nor his eloquence, and his death found him gaily betting upon its date.

The World of Dress possessed many excellent features from many excellent sources. Fashion news from Paris, Vienna and New York, interviews about dress with famous people. Sir James Linton, Sydney Grundy, Max Pemberton, Mortimer Menpes,

Downey, the royal photographer, and lastly and most amusingly Dan Leno gave opinions. Casually Dan Leno declared that he of all men best understood women's clothes—because he had worn them for years; and he knew all about them from the inside; the property to secure more laughter for him than anything else in his mirthful career being an old wired bonnet, tapped on and tied with strings. Every time it came off he just tapped it on a different part of his head, and the audience roared.

Costume was an integral part of his songs, and he haunted old clothes shops till he found the exact things he wanted, for they must be *real* to get the actuality as he saw it.

A constant contributor to *The World of Dress* was Mrs. Barry Pain, the most humorous woman I ever knew, and she illuminated with originality as well as wit many occurrences on the clothes-line.

Her comic answers to correspondents included three that are unforgettable :

Mignonette.—On no account have it out; bandage carefully with raw alpaca and eat only brown bread and seccotine.

Minerva.—You send no name, no address and no questions, but I hope this will find you and tell you all you want to know.

Madrigal.—Never take the foot into consideration. Take threes in boots, twos in shoes and plenty of cabs.

But alas! *The World of Dress* followed the fate of all journals conducted by the amateur, and I took its



THE COVER OF *THE WORLD OF DRESS*

SPECIALLY DESIGNED BY WM. NICHOLSON.

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troubles to Arthur Pearson, who managed it and financed it liberally without much personal concern in it. Arthur Pearson was rather difficult of approach ; he was quite the busiest man I have ever known, five minutes were the extent of any interview granted to me, and during these he would watch the door for the next comer and answer the telephone to a below-stairs clerk, instructed perhaps in the value of an interrupting bell.

CHAPTER IV

MORE ABOUT MYSELF AS A JOURNALIST

“ Live, love and laugh, be ever this your motto
To make life lovely as a dream of Watteau ;
Though art and nature coax your pleasant hours
With pictured beauty, books and joy of flowers,
Let still your dearest culture be the grace
That makes your heart your old friends’ homing-place.”

HOW vain of me to print this New Year’s greeting written to me by Malcolm Salaman, but I grow more and more grateful while I think how years ago he laboured to promote my profit and my amusement.

Wherever I wandered as editor or contributor I had his comradeship, and he led me through that world of art and letters, and up to the firmament of theatrical stars, where I had always wished to dwell.

He had little difficulty in his pioneering, for his father’s house was amongst the most popular meeting-places for the elect.

Charles Salaman, for many decades a prominent figure in the musical life of London, is best known now as the composer of many beautiful anthems and the famous song he made of Shelley’s “ I arise from dreams of Thee.” Unabashed I admit that I never returned to him his copy of this poem with marginal notes in

his own handwriting. I hold it amongst my treasures, together with a birthday letter which declares that although he did not learn the date from a biographical dictionary, I must accept affection with his good wishes, and he added, "I specially congratulate myself upon being spared in my old age to write you these few lines."

He smiled his welcome upon me on many occasions when he would sit at his piano and assure me that he "existed on kindness and cocoa," while he deplored my want of understanding of his art. Around him would gather in worship many of the younger generation. I recollect as one of his special favourites Evelyn Millard, a tall and lovely dark-eyed girl wearing white muslin and a pink rose, and reciting with that excellent diction she had learnt from her father, who was professor of elocution at the Royal Academy of Music.

Brandon Thomas was another accepted friend, and what a handsome Brandon Thomas he was! Of extraordinary vivacity and an infectious enthusiasm for the actor's and playwright's art, for Whistler's painting, for the Artists' Rifle Volunteers, and showing always an amiable readiness to sing to his own accompaniment "The fine old Irish gentleman."

Under the auspices of Malcolm Salaman I found Luther Munday whilst he was piloting Lord Londesborough through the chairmanship of the old Lyric Club, which dispensed much hospitality amid the merry circumstance.

Such cheery times we used to have with Lord and Lady Londesborough presiding over many prominent representatives of the art circles. They would respond

gladly to the call of a specially chartered steamer from Westminster Bridge to witness the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race from the Club House at Barnes, with a Guards band discoursing music all the way, and the Club servants dispensing an even more exhilarating accompaniment.

Lord Londesborough's devotion to the turf and the stage would of course suggest an equally festive enjoyment of the Royal Cup day at Ascot from the top of a coach or an omnibus which would be crowded with celebrities, all with very special information from special sources. I believe the Club luncheons at Ascot were initiated by the Lyric Club; anyhow my social experiences under its genial influence, aided and abetted by Luther Munday, are written down amongst my joyful memories not entirely unconstructive.

To Malcolm Salaman also I owe my acquaintance with Arthur Pinero which was inaugurated at a private view at the Royal Academy. I often went to Pinero's parties, where his wife played hostess to everyone who mattered in society, art, literature and the drama. It was at his house I first saw Ellen Terry off the stage, and met Richard le Gallienne, enjoying much converse with him, for he had been reading some trivial article of mine in the *Daily Chronicle*, and my ready vanity was flattered when he dropped into poetry.

On this occasion perhaps he did not "build the lofty rhyme," but when a poet wants to have tea with you his merest lilt is apt to sound lyrical. The incident was so long ago I don't believe I recall the lines correctly, but their purport is all right, and I am sure that when I

received them at greater length they were perfect in their conduct.

“ Mrs. Aria writes
Every day I see.
Would that she would write
Sometimes unto me :
If only once a year
Just a little card
Asking me to tea.”

Several little cards, all eloquent of my appreciation, were despatched, and when Richard le Gallienne would come to see me I was disappointed if I could glimpse no manuscript emerging from his coat pocket.

He read to me the lecture he gave at the O.P. Club on the simplicities of those who patronised the Empire Theatre, which Mrs. Ormiston Chant was endeavouring to rescue from its peripatetic customers. Whether le Gallienne was the apostle of purity or of the liberty of the subject I cannot recollect, but he was an excellent orator with the chin of Shelley, and he moved it to some fascination, so that rapidly I was installed amongst his eager readers, and was enchanted when I received a copy of his *Book Bills of Narcissus*, inscribed to “ A daughter of Eve with open admiration.”

I had become a free lance in the newspapers, contributing irregularly to half a dozen, and weekly to *Black and White*, “ The Diary of a Daughter of Eve,” which brought me much entertainment whatsoever king might reign. C. N. Williamson, ever kindly, was the first to accept my work, and his example was followed by Oswald Crawford, who was so splendid a creature to look upon that some envious observer described him as a whole procession in himself. He

looked, indeed, like some fine Portuguese pirate, an all-conquering hero well armed to the task of snatching possessions and pleasure.

He showed me much courtesy, and it was at his flat in Queen Anne's Mansions that I first met Violet Hunt, laurel leaves already blooming in her bright hair, pretty with deep-set purple eyes, sprightly and eager for experience. Here, too, I received cordial and prized attention from Mrs. Lynn Linton, whose interest in me and my work added to my considerable conceit.

How vividly she comes back to me with her large piercing black eyes behind highly polished glasses and her grey hair surmounted by a cap with a lace bow.

I shared two pleasures and one misfortune with Mrs. Lynn Linton ; we both adored dress and needlework, whilst we suffered alike from the name of Eliza.

On that evening when she patted my shoulder and asked where I lived and expressed approval of my articles, I was tongue-tied and awkward, though not blind to her splendid bearing, to her well-made black satin dress with its white satin waistcoat overlaid with black lace and jet, or to her beringed hands and the note of authority in her voice. By me she was respected as headmistress of my craft, and whilst I listened to her she told—how strange it seems now to record it !—that she was the first woman to obtain a fixed salary on a daily newspaper—I believe it was the *Morning Chronicle*—and that her brother being shocked at such proceeding as her evening visit to produce and correct her column, would accompany her to the office and remain there until she was free to be escorted home.

The traditions of John Cook, editor, seem to give little occasion for such anxiety, and although there are records of quarrels between them, these could not have been very serious, for it was under his editorship of *The Saturday Review* that Mrs. Lynn Linton pilloried *The Girl of the Period*, denouncing and trouncing her with a scathing persistence which brought a horde of wild women and tame men shrieking round her desk.

One afternoon I was as gladly and badly as usual writing at my table in my exalted flat in Maida Vale when I found Mrs. Linton at my elbow bonneted, cloaked and beaming with benevolence. My servant had not announced her clearly, if at all, so that a second or two passed before I could recollect the name of my obviously distinguished visitor, whom I rose to welcome with delight.

"You are surprised to see me, but I have been thinking of you so much, and I hear that your husband is in South Africa; my dear," she concluded impressively, "don't make his return impossible; you are young, you are attractive, and you are in the thick of it, be sure you take to yourself no man friend, and be sure that you," she repeated it, "do not make it impossible for your husband to come back to you."

I reassured the dear old lady that my mother was living with me, that no stricter duenna could be imagined, and that I was really quite safe by myself.

She appeared much relieved by this news of my mother, while she hinted to me of her own sad experiences which she trusted I would escape. She was immensely kind; what a dull idiot I was not to tax that kindness by drawing upon her personal knowledge

of Walter Savage Landor, Carlyle, Charles Voysey, Coventry Patmore, Dickens, Thackeray and Ruskin, while I might also have gleaned her real opinion of Mary Evans who became George Eliot.

She stayed with me only a very few moments, but begged me to go and see her on Saturdays, when I knew she held a court of great contemporaries and smiled upon all young seekers after fame. Many years later I did hazard a proposition to interview her, and I felt so guilty of my tactlessness, when she wrote to me from Malvern, where she had gone to rest from her strenuous town labours.

“What have I ever done to you in this life or a former that you should want to open the door of a mental torture chamber? You should realise, for you have imagination, all that goes to my memory” are just a few words I venture to extract from that letter which ended “don’t think me an unmitigated wretch, but give me an inch of your charity.”

I gave her a mile of my repentance at having dared to disturb her badly wanted peace.

The fortune of the gregarious is as the fortune of the snowball, and the collection of acquaintances increases naturally as entertainments are given and taken.

“So pleased to have met you, and I hope you will come and see me!” the proposal materialises at a luncheon or a tea, and there is another added to the list who may forward a bunch of pink roses or a cross of chrysanthemums as gay or grave occasion may demand. There may be a falling from worship of men, of babies or of Pekingese, but all women agree in adoring flowers. I have ever been more or less of

a floral depôt, inclining most affectionately towards white lilac, a widely known fact which was wont to induce an inquisitive to greet these flowers on my table with "Who is in the white lilac stage now?"

It was to Mrs. Lynn Linton's Saturday At Homes I owed my first introduction to Madame Novikoff, whose advent into the political world had evoked varied comment.

Madame Novikoff had much endowment for her work of reconciling the interests of old Imperial Russia with those of advancing Liberal England, where W. E. Gladstone was Prime Minister to her encouragement; and her pen, her personality and her knowledge secured for her many detractors and the triumph of the dislike of Lord Beaconsfield, who nicknamed her M.P. for Russia.

But history and memoirs record her indefatigable labours, her interest in the education and the improved condition of her people, her successes, her failures, the protests of her partisans and the accusations of her slanderers. If you turn over the pages of *The Pall Mall Gazette* and other publications you can read under the signature of O.K. her strenuous arguments, her reasonable and unreasonable contentions, and you will appreciate her tenacity of purpose while you can glimpse into the deeps of her desires and marvel at the heights of her achievement. She came of a fighting family and was a brave soldier in the battle, her pen was her sword dipped in diplomacy, and she was not reluctant to apply vehemence if necessary to press her point.

Madame Novikoff is the only Russian lady I have ever known, though some have acted to my enlighten-

ment and others have danced into my speculations. We became neighbours long after I first had sight of her at Mrs. Lynn Linton's, where the crowd pressing forward to see her prevented any but a very short audience.

Her sought-after entertainments impeded the traffic from the park railings to a quarter of the way down Harley Street. Here was a polyglot mingling of many classes from many countries. Madame was more tolerant at home than on paper, and she spoke fluently in four languages. Statesmen and nobles invaded her along with the painters, players, musicians, propagandists and priests. She had insight into the needs of them all, while she was ultra-keen to succour the cast down, and her knowledge of the best method to do this was no less profound than her desire to exercise it.

Notwithstanding her generosity in word and deed, there was always an atmosphere of dignity, even of austerity in her surroundings, and some ceremoniousness, unusual in private houses in England, served to enhance this effect.

In the lobby of her hall you would write your name in a book, and entering the library you would bend the knee to a holy picture which extends from ceiling to mantelpiece, and gaze with some reverence at two Tintoretos on the near wall before you walked up the polished stairs to the reception-room with its significant contents, centred by a glass-topped table containing mementoes of W. E. Gladstone.

It has been said that Madame Novikoff was the cause which brought to unpunctuality that rigid observer of the rules of time. After a conference in St. James's

Hall he had armed her through the Green Park to Claridge's, and thus deferred a dinner hour for a hungry and protesting company.

Fully conscious of my weakness of light outlook and casual observance which made me an unsteady thinker and rash talker, Madame Novikoff accorded me some intimacy, and took some interest in my frivolous work and in my daughter's attempts at acting.

She would beg me to understand she counted dress of considerable importance ; she would interrogate me about French fashions and new jewellery, while I was aware my knowledge of Cartier might be equalled by hers of Cellini ; and she would give me a chance to look into her deep cedar closet lined with sumptuous sables, and I would grow audacious to the point of discussing the white bear as a stole rather than as a symbol of a great kingdom. She had an ineradicable dislike for Jews, which she proclaimed in my hearing, so that I confessed my origin and my faith, upholding my pride in these.

She took my hand soothingly, but bending her sternest expression upon me, she came to an arbitrary decision.

" My dear, you cannot be Jewish any longer, upon that religion has been built a better, and you must adopt it."

She would not hear of my sincere conviction, for at that moment she was almost angry with her beloved son, the Governor of Baku, because he had drawn a good Jew in his book.

She moderated her condemnation after his death, when the Jews joined the Russians in erecting a monument in his memory ; but she never became reconciled

to my belief, and "You must not be a Jewess," she averred when she offered for my acceptance and meditation a pamphlet entitled "Christ or Moses—Which?" She, however, admitted the following conciliatory dictum of Professor Michaud:

"From a habit of detesting the Jews, people are sometimes brought to depreciate Judaism and ascribe to it almost materialistic doctrines. Judaism is certainly not Christianity, but neither is it materialism."

Madame had desired to investigate the assertion of Mr. Lucien Wolf that the teaching of Judaism is spreading. He wrote: "This virtual assumption that the limits of human knowledge can extend no farther than those of the visible world appears to me to be the central idea of Judaism." But her intention which crystallised to publication was not unanimously approved, and some dissenters went so far as to accuse her of heresy, and Gladstone had answered her appeal for judgment.

She granted me permission to publish a letter of his. Modestly, I take a very small portion.

"MY DEAR MADAME NOVIKOFF,

I do not see why the word 'heresy' should be flung at you. Heresy is a very grave matter, and should not be charged except in cases where not only the subject-matter is grave but also the whole authority of the Church or Christian community has been brought to bear. I conceive, however, that the question of Jewish opinion on a future state, as opened in the Old Testament, is a question quite open to discussion. My own state of information is by no means so advanced as to warrant the expression of confident and final conclu-

sions. But I think there are some things that are clearly enough to be borne in mind. We cannot but notice the wise reserve with which the Creeds treat the subject of future state. After the period when they were framed, Christian opinion came gradually, I believe, to found itself upon an assumption due to the Greek philosophy, and especially to Plato, namely, that of the natural immortality of the human soul. And this opinion (which I am not much inclined to accept) supplies us, so to speak, with spectacles through which we look back upon the Hebrew ideas conveyed in the Old Testament.

W. E. GLADSTONE."

During the last few months I have sought and found Madame Novikoff, still in Brunswick Place, a shy, retiring house in a shy, retiring corner of Regent's Park, where she was in excellent spirits and a no less excellent black velvet gown, grey-capped in tasselled wool. She was erect at the table, her hands yet busy in service for her beloved Russia. Her immobile features so characteristic of her descent from "the magnificent Muscovite" are deeply lined with sorrow, but she is upright in her bearing, if slow in her movements, and as she observed, laughingly suiting her words as ever to her listener :

"If my morals were as weak as my legs my friends would deny my acquaintance."

It was inevitable that I should ask her for a bone of her biography, should demand a reminiscence or so of the departed giants who had been her friends.

"Tell me about Bismarck."

"How can I when I only saw him once?"

"Of Queen Victoria."

"She received me."

"Of Tsar Nicholas I."

"I was his goddaughter, and he was ever gracious to me."

"Of Skoboleff."

"A martyred hero."

"Of Verestchagin."

"Splendid patriot who died in the arms of war, his fervid obsession."

"Of Tyndall, of Froude, of Carlyle, of Kinglake?"

"I will tell you a story to amuse you. Kinglake was, you are aware, of no religion, and I was always struck by his courageous outspokenness on this. He said once to me, 'I am a heathen, I dislike churches, and had I my way I would write on every chapel, church and cathedral only one line, "Important—if true."'"

"But," she said, "I feel too much to talk of my old friends. I will give you a maxim :

"One lives not where one dwells but where one loves"; and she continued, "I belong to two countries, but I have only one nationality, and I shall never desert it."

Yet I coaxed her to confess that she grows more and more conservative; and so she farewelled me, "I am glad to see you, but in writing of me I beg that your favour may not make me ridiculous."

I went out into the gloom of Marylebone Road to these parting words while feeling conscious that Lord Melbourne was wise in his generation when he urged that religion should not be allowed to pervade the

sphere of private life, and I dared to restore myself to my normal triviality by a remembrance of the old, old tale of the negress when rebuked for her determination to wed with a Chinaman. "You must not do it, Sarah, think what your children will be."

"I don't care if they'se Jews," defied the valiant if vague ethnologist.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT MY SISTER JULIA

WHILST I was pursuing my lesser industries with a sufficiency of success to appease the butcher and soothe the dressmaker, Julia was passing through those various phases of vexation and disappointment inevitable to the novelist of earnest purpose. Whether the public cheered or Fleet Street damned, she herself was never satisfied, never attaining her own standard, and she would always laugh at my assertion that her last was the best book she or anyone else had ever written. My extravagant praise did not provoke any belief in herself, though it confirmed, to her derision, my prejudice in her favour.

The reception of *Dr. Phillips* had brought as much annoyance as pleasure. *The Babe of Bohemia* included some misinterpretation of the Salvation Army with a comprehension of the thirsty habits of journalists, which contributed in a measure to its condemnation, although in no way detracting from the extent of its popularity. I am uncertain as to which volume followed the other, and of the date of the interregnum occupied by works of Art, but I know when disconcerting blame fell upon her, for *The Sphinx's Lawyer*, written to defend the undefendable Oscar Wilde, and

some other work of hers, had failed to meet the critical estimation she thought its sincerity deserved, she decided she would retire, she would be ruled out, she could not bear to be misunderstood, she would not lay herself open to such chance, she never wrote a line that was not of humanity she had felt and observed, it was recognition of her honesty as an artist she desired, she vowed she would write no more novels for ten years.

But ever Julia's books were triumphant in achieving public favour ; some great imagination going to the ingenious murder by morphia of the wife in *Dr. Phillips* ; no little prophecy of the coming of communal living in *Joseph in Jeopardy* ; and great skill in combining the financial with the fighting aspect of the Boer War in *Pigs in Clover*, wherein the death of the paralysed mother is surely epic.

Happily the cash point of her ten years' abstinence vow did not trouble her. She had more money than she needed for herself, and she gave with an open-handedness supposed, by man only, to be an attribute of man only.

Julia's spirits were always splendid, even as her vitality and her energy which overruled every condition ; and like all perfectly healthy people she was convinced that physical weakness was under the control of the sufferer.

My numerous ailments—affectionate relatives had labelled me "not strong"—found her incredulous, and although she filled my room with roses and my sideboard with peaches, she was for ever chaffing me with a likeness to "poor Anne," presented by Richardson, as the delicate member of a whole family and outliving the lot of them.

Alas ! the similarity threatens to be true.

For all the characters in Julia's books she preferred living models, and she took them unconscionably. I have served a dozen times, often in a most unfavourable light, she had no respect for my morals in print, did not hesitate to laugh at my pathetic symptoms of illness, and had condemned my only daughter to a heart-rending decease at the age of five. It was as inevitable that others should think such conduct indecorous as that I should find it merely amusing.

I always thought Julia's greatest gift lay in her power to extract tears ; no sofa scene of passion, and she gave us many, produced the sense of reality engendered by her tales of little children, of bereft mothers, of stricken wives, or of the approach of death. She never failed to produce tears when she was trying to do so.

She was a flagrant sentimentalist although pleased to imagine, except with her own children whom she adored, that her best fitting mantle was well faced with cynicism.

During the time she refrained from writing novels she did not remain idle ; having started a small collection of eighteenth-century engravings of mezzotint and stipple, she particularly favoured the English stipple colour prints, and because no book existed telling her what she wanted to know about them, she set to work and wrote one. It cost her years of study and infinite labour—she never learnt quickly—but it was a sumptuous affair, Messrs. Macmillan saw to that, and the collectors gave it cordial welcome. She followed this with the lives of John Raphael Smith and of James and William Ward the mezzotint engravers, falling back to novel writing, with a romantic

excursion in biography, *Nelson's Legacy*, the heroine being no other than Emma Lady Hamilton, with whose story she delighted to tamper in her favourite eighteenth century, while she adorned her pages with many reproductions of the Emma portraits by Romney.

I shared Julia's intense love of pictures, and during her studies for material for her Art books I would wait happily enough with her for hours while she hunted in the Print Room of the British Museum.

It was long, however, before I managed to induce her to understand my infatuation for the playhouse and the players, although she went on the Committee of the Independent Theatre, which was, I believe, the first of all London societies formed for the improvement of the drama. Here she divided her privileges of administration with George Moore and Frank Harris, while J. T. Grein was chairman, and the record of the first season includes the presentation of *Widowers' Houses*, *Ghosts* and *The Strike at Arlingford*, the last being written by George Moore who was already an established intimate of ours.

But Julia had little concern for the programmes, showing far more in the subsequent supper parties at her house where many would meet to debate hotly on Ibsen and Bernard Shaw, and here I greeted amongst notable others Ada Leverson, novelist and brilliant wag, and always ready with some amusing tale to prove such virtue. There was one elderly relation of hers whose doings on her tongue never failed to produce laughter; she would describe him as the model of good manners, "never even being rude to the governess." She invented a race of Anglo-aliens, described Lady X's parties as being mixed as any Russian salad,

and it was she who discovered a footlight favourite "who looked like a lady on the stage and an actress off it."

Catching sight of me alone, she insisted I was the only woman to supply a new design for a gown to be dedicated conveniently to the *rendezvous*. Her golden hair and her violet eyes of earnest depth were assets, and she flirted alluringly with confession of enterprises she would not have dreamt of undertaking. She was delicately elusive in her methods, and her airy nothings crystallised to wit as she spoke them in her gentle voice; she was reputed of half a dozen serious romances and twice as many little intrigues, while *Punch* owed to her many excellent jokes, and there was no doubt whatever of her attractiveness.

Arthur Symons was of the many distinguished in those crowds at Julia's, a tall, delicate young man of shaven chin and light eyes, whose bearded picture by Augustus John now holds so hauntingly the spiritual essence of him.

He yielded me the compliment of a small poem. I am abnormally proud of it for immortalising my gown of pale yellow brocade with flowing sleeves of golden net.

COLOUR STUDY

"She sits in a gown of gold
On the floor by the fire a-cold,
Wings of gold outspread
(Sleeves you may say instead).
And the firelight flushes a light
On a faultless shoulder's white,
Caressing a cheek that glows
From a lily into a rose.
She sits by the fire a-cold
A queen in a gown of gold.
A. S."



Wm. B. Smith

MY SISTER, JULIA FRANKAU (FRANK DANBY)

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If Frank Harris were of the company, and this was often the case, he would remain after the other guests had departed, and I was ordered to sit to attention with Julia while he read us some short prose stories or related tales of buccaneering adventure in America. He wrote and read very well, and perhaps it was churlish to feel tired after 3 a.m. and to go to bed wondering how he had effected the burials of the various waiters he had shot for delay in attending to his demands.

Julia took some pleasure in his deep husky voice and had an immense opinion of his narrative powers, while she had always a great predilection for parties convened on any excuse, for idle gossip, or to exploit a new cook, or as a prelude to the card table, or mainly diplomatic for the advancement of some well-deserving creature or cause. She introduced proudly the merits of a mound of ice inset with sweetmeats and served with boiling cherry brandy under the name of "Paragraph Pudding."

From one of her dinners thus endowed, two personages stood and sat to my special interest, and although there is no excuse whatever to imbue them with the venal spirit, and perhaps they hated ice pudding, I am sure they will both be honoured by the printed association with each other.

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes enters as a very distinctive figure with the bloom of 1840 to the credit of her simply parted hair, her fichued shoulders, her intensely feminine face almost childlike in its rounded curves and rose-leaf complexion, her glinting eyes and her tiny teeth, which looked as if they would bite the good and bad out of everything.

She irradiated amiability, the slight roll to her "r" giving hint, with her blue and pink dress, of her French education, further emphasised by her vivacity and underlined by her gay grace. I knew her at once as an admirer of Julia's, whilst watching her delight in whatever audacity "Frank Danby" was uttering to create laughter and spread the merry atmosphere essential to parties.

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes remained Julia's admirer, asking and receiving from her always an appreciation of her many books and a considerable comprehension of her ambition and of the skill and work which went to attain it.

Coupled with the name of Mr. Walkley, I hailed her with no reason in my coupling, save that they sat opposite to me during dinner.

I had much respect for A. B. W., who was then a secretary at the Post Office, and a star feature in the *Star* newspaper, where he had by his literary style and classical knowledge altered the whole method of writing about the stage which he showed tendency to indulge with humour as indicated by Aristotle.

Dignity went ever to Mr. Walkley with a deliberate reserve ; I knew him of academic honour, and I felt shy of him and so wavered in my determination to speak to him, even whilst I was observing that he was genial—definitely genial—in his attitude towards a pretty neighbour who was appealing to my sense of costume in black silk and ermine with a pink rose at her waist.

Perhaps he had sent her that pink rose and eleven like it ? I wondered. There was little reason I should not address Mr. Walkley ; as sister of his hostess it was

obviously my duty to do so, I argued, while trying to catch his eye to prelude the audacity.

The pretty lady dropped her pink rose, by accident or design I do not know, and the signal for the drawing-room synchronised to leave me undecided. But what woman wants held the usual sequel of divine co-operation, and half an hour later I was arguing with Mr. Walkley about actresses, and his excuse for having expressed a conviction that a critic does his work better if the beguiling beauties behind the footlights withheld themselves from his acquaintance.

I wonder if Mr. Walkley might have been included in my intimate friends to this day if I had not offered him a boiled chop for luncheon on a dull morning; his taste is unimpeachable, and he might have liked me, but he could never have accepted my cook. I know that now, whilst I comprehend that a *cordon bleu* or even a heroine inspired by Beeton may prepare many feasts.

How, when, or why it happened, I regret his alienation, for I am aware A. B. W. can be a charming companion to women, betraying considerable intelligence about their clothes and declaring that he likes Fashion because it is so absurd. In his latest book, *Pastiche and Prejudice*, where he is convicted as delightful essayist, he confesses to a close observance when he propagates his protest against the enforced square patch in the heel of the finest silk stocking.

However, when not at his work he is to be found most frequently at the Garrick Club, and I am re-possessed by my consciousness of his reserve and the fact that he is the most precious ornament of *The Times*, so that I dread his gentle irony while I venture,

"Why should you not write a foreword to my book?"

Of course Mr. Walkley never dreams I shall have sufficient courage to publish the amusing and most chivalrous argument he sends against any such proceeding.

"Write a foreword to your book? Not if I know it! And that is the point: I don't know it, I don't know what your book is to be. Mainly fiction, I guess: and, so far as your threatened allusion to myself is concerned, I am sure no allusion can tell the truth about me. The dark and dangerous deeps of a comparatively simple life are not thus to be fathomed. You think you know, but you don't, and never did, and it doesn't matter because what you think you know you daren't print, so by all means substitute a deliberate but printable fiction as you will. But don't let that deter you from being reasonably (however fictitiously) indiscreet about your other faithful if less fascinating friends. Poor dears! I look forward to reading about *them* with a pleasure wholly untainted by belief.

A. B. W."

In one of Pinero's plays the drunken wastrel of noble birth is accused by his misalliance:

"He's always maudlin about his blessed family."

I could maudle about this blessed bit of mine, Julia, until the end of time. I could dilate on Julia at home and Julia out, on her complete indifference to the social position her talent might have brought her, on her absorption in her possessions, on the small

number of her intimate friends, on her acute love of the beautiful in pictures, furniture and china, her obsession for disguising her best qualities, and her exquisite capacity for embroidery.

There was no sort of needlework she could not accomplish to perfection, and while she plied her own needle so well it was impossible for her to resist any opportunity to add to her rarely beautiful samples of old Chinese and Japanese execution. To show these to their advantage she would have huge pillows of embroidery in vivid colours placed upon black satin chairs and sofas, while her black satin curtains would be draped behind pelmets gay with Oriental designs interrupted with gold thread ; *famille verte* and *famille rose* blossomed in gorgeous colour around her pots and jars of all shapes, and very good indeed was the effect with her jade green walls and old lac cabinets and the little Japanese trees which held for her a great fascination.

I can see her now clad in a black Japanese gown, invaded by golden dragons, seated in a deep chair ; at her back an enormous cushion embroidered with a ponderous elephant lightly burdened with scarlet flowers ; her feet upon a stool traced with pink and red roses, her hands holding a piece of cambric, her eyes looking up from this to fix themselves in dreamy adoration on a little stunted dark green tree rooted in sand planted in blue and white china.

She was weaving a story round it, not quite sure whether she had imagined it or read it.

I felt myself back in that double bed of our nursery days.

"Go on," I encouraged her.

"It was planted by a gardener who fell in love with his master's daughter, the girl was sent away to die after her marriage with a prince, and the spirit of the departed came back to visit her lowly lover. She was wearing a white kimono with white chrysanthemums in her hair, while she bade him to plant an oak for her, to water it with his blood, and she promised when that oak had become a tree she would return and lead him to paradise.

But the tree grew slowly, and only when he was an old man shrivelled and bent and bowed they found him one morning dead beside the tree, his pruning-knife by his side, a great gash in his throat whence the blood had run over the yet young oak. The root shows now the stain."

"Hullo," she said, looking up, "you there?"

"Yes, of course I am."

"I was dreaming about that oak tree."

"Pity, it is a cedar," I objected, not comprehending her passion for these death-in-life abortions which my practical mind sees as through the wrong end of a telescope, frozen corpses of beautiful lives.

However, Julia grew bored with the entirely Eastern atmosphere of her room, properly assured that the old English colour prints of her newer fancy did not seem quite at home in it, and that the need for Staffordshire was urgent, and it was to their better bestowal that she sought and found them the more righteous dwelling which oddly enough had been in occupation by Emma Lady Hamilton at the time when Nelson was visiting her.

It was a charming old house wherein every crooked door and slanting floor gave its tottering testimony

to the date of its building. It confessed its birth on every worm-eaten panel, and, provided though it might be with porcelain baths and internal telephones, it never looked a day younger. What hunts we had in old furniture shops to stamp it further with its correct tradition. But Julia would frequent Christie's as much in the interests of the bargain she did not obtain as of the game of Bridge which never failed her in the vicinity.

Julia and I had much diversity of opinion about cards and gambling ; in the earlier days I endeavoured to follow her lead and stultify my own inclination just for the pleasure of being with her, but I gave up the job with some relief when after I had been struggling for months to surprise her with my efficiency in solo whist she said it was a stupid game, and she should never play anything but Bridge.

She never taught me cards, and I have never missed the knowledge, but I was proud in making her address to the arts of her interest, although she had no need to achieve elegance on her own initiative, her means permitting her the services of the most deserving dressmakers, yet she did completely abandon the careless ways of her youth and condescend to employ elaborate means to the attractive end. Together we investigated varied artists in personal decoration to enjoy their patter in the cause of "copy" as much as in the higher excuse of beauty.

Regardless of the proverbial birth-rate of familiarity our perpetual companionship left us with an unchanging admiration for each other, and for James. Whatever weakness or strength we were displaying, we never forgot the parental edict backed by Watts, "Love one another."

We three, Julia, James and I, each thought the other "so clever," becoming so inextricably mixed up in the minds of the journalists that James would complain laughingly, "I cannot write a play without Julia and Eliza getting a notice of their accomplishments," and he would always declare he dare not reveal his age until he had looked into the columns of *Who's Who*, and regulated his years to fit the fictions there of the birthdays of his sisters.

Julia would send her proofs to James, and James would relate a yard of scenario, and if I had immortalised a draper in doggerel, a weakness of mine, I could find audience in brother and sister alike. But the most remarkable proof of Julia's unassailable loyalty was her coming with me to the St. James's Hall where Ada Crossley sang some words I wrote for Liza Lehmann to set to music. Julia and I both suffered from a deficiency of music, but she was less deaf to melody, and had indeed, through a deep friendship with a well-known violinist, succeeded in writing a book with a musician as hero.

She possessed exceptional forces, never sparing her energy to reach a desirable goal, and she fell through her enthusiasm for Bridge into some tiresome litigation which, although crowned with success as to the outward seeming, brought in the excitement of its victory some untoward weakness of the heart. I knew her to be ill, although she always declared defiantly as if insulted by the enquiry :

"I am quite well, thank you, do not fuss about me, attend to your own personal ailments," she would scoff and evade my anxiety.

Yet I was right about that celebrated cause, and

after the triumph celebrated in a magnificent luncheon at the Savoy, she confessed she was tired and disgusted ; the whole thing, including the splendid success, was vulgar and silly ; she admitted that her position had been impregnable, and that the malice which attacked her might have been left to do its worst without the declaration of twelve jurors.

But she set herself gaily to the task of founding in the interest of a mixed community of card players the Cleveland Club which flourishes to this hour to add another stone to the monument of evidence of her ability to achieve whatever she undertook.

When writing a novel she became, or wanted to become, a hermit, and my constant interruptions of her solitude in London being incorrigible, she would migrate to Brighton, to Eastbourne, to France or to Italy rather than offend by refusing me admittance. But yet I absorbed some of her time and thoughts wherever she wandered, and amongst many enchanting letters, I quote one written from Sicily.

“ The nett idea of this holiday is that the title has been taken.

It never can happen again.

It never can happen again that I live in the curve of an exquisite bay land-locked with brown and purple mountains snow-crowned, with villages nestling at their base ; that from my windows I can lean out and pick ripe oranges ; that the terrace garden has large lilies growing in profusion near banks of violets ; that I can pluck hyacinths as if they were wild flowers and fill my room with them. It never can happen again

that I make friends with an Italian gardener who pays me daily visits with hands laden with garden sweets, narcissi and roses, mignonette and some great scarlet flowers whose name I do not know.

It never can happen again that I write a complete novel in six weeks, and that when I want to play *trente et quarante* I shall find it next door to me with every element of disorder rigorously excluded and my seat reserved in the best position; footstool and cushion, card and pencil brought to me, and the croupier sympathising when I lose and suggesting to me when to vary my game.

And never again will a man like Professor Salinus take trouble to conduct me personally over a wonderful museum and teach me so much in so short a time while telling me that I have as yet seen nothing.

It never can happen again, and I know this will interest you specially, that I am thrown in daily contact with an actress and that she has revolutionised my whole point of view of women on the stage."

In fact during that trip Julia became enchanted by two actresses, by Ellaline Terriss, to whom she alludes, and by Edna May. She had formed her previous opinions upon quite an uninstructed basis rather upon the principle of that man who grumbled at his newly made wife always talking about money.

"Money, money, money at every meal," he confided to a friend, who made questioning answer:

"What does she do with it all, Tom?"

"I don't know, I never give her any."

That was Julia with regard to the stage folk, she never knew any until I insisted that she should, and yet she had the audacity to condemn them wholesale.



MYSELF LOOKING AT THE PORTRAIT OF MY SISTER

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However, she lived to repent as thoroughly as she had sinned, making the honourable amend when she wrote *The Heart of a Child*, setting on high the honest little gutter girl who went on the boards, as the greatest lady in the high circles she reached with all dramatic convention.

That book attained the widest popularity of any she had ever published, and once or twice the story has been produced on a film, and in its dramatic form Renée Kelly has played the heroine in London and the provinces.

The letter from Sicily concluded with a firm determination to meet all the actresses and actors I could possibly present to her, and it struck a more vital note.

“ Perhaps it will be better for me to let my new book simmer a bit, I can finish it in three weeks if ? ? ? ”

An interrogation which should have terminated, “ If you will give me leisure.”

I could never do without my daily pilgrimage to my oracle if I could reach her, and although there existed the strict rule of “ not before a quarter-past one ” I know I transgressed it often, in my anxiety for her company and her counsel.

That I proved of some use to her I realise so proudly in a few pencilled lines written during the last days of her last illness, when a bad attack of influenza kept me from her bedside.

“ Dearest, I miss you beyond words, yet desire you to do everything your alarming physician orders ; I find *Twilight* depressing ; how could I have done it ? Do you think you could see me through another ? ”

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT CECIL RALEIGH, ALFRED SUTRO, THE MILHOLLAND
FAMILY AND W. T. STEAD

“**S**Ocialism is the religion of the future.”
I seem to have heard something like that before, and on the same tongue too, I conjectured, as I caught its echo at a corner of Regent’s Park, and turned to see Cecil Raleigh, brown felt-hatted, white-stocked, tweed-suited, with one hand affectionately placed on his bicycle while his other held the eternal cigarette, and he was dogmatising to a bright-faced maiden whose rapt attention suggested she was accepting him as a prophet of all the best gospels.

The clock was nearing four, and the encounter took place just outside my house, so tea for three was most clearly indicated. Over those cheering cups Cecil Raleigh proved extremely amusing. We decided to meet often in the future, although there was no point of view of morality, politics or religion which did not find us at vehement difference, but we shared an enthusiasm for the theatre, and he was engaged in preparation of one of his melodramas which annually filled the stage at Drury Lane Theatre, sometimes in collaboration with other authors, but always under his personal and violent direction.

Cecil Raleigh was undoubtedly very clever, and no

one was more cocksure of this than Cecil Raleigh, while he had no turn for sentiment, so that his companionship was a pleasure if I did not venture to dispute with him, and proved willing to listen to his opinions rather than to dwell upon mine. However, I am aware I liked to be with him, and that I indulged that liking to some extent. He would come to tell me of the scenes he was planning, of the witticisms he knew would "go," and occasionally he would disturb all the household in his determination to illustrate an incident of his fancy. When he was writing *The Price of Peace* every walking-stick and fire-iron from basement to garret were employed in elucidating the righteous stacking of the Boer guns.

Now and again he would throw out an idea for a new plot, never failing to resent rudely my hint of its likeness to others. He revelled in highly coloured crime and catastrophe by sea and land and under the sea; but into every circumstance, however appalling, he never forgot to introduce to public taste a purple patch of blatant humour, served with sporting-jargon sauce.

Cecil had a strange individuality, bred, and to some degree cultured, as much in the training stable owned by his father as in the so-called literary arena where he came to stand to his profit.

He was at once contemplative and alert, ignorant and well informed. God and Gibbon shared his best regards.

His well-kept fingers twisted his monster moustache into upright points, whilst he gave forth dogma and defied contradiction. He delivered his unalterable doctrines with abrupt little sniffs, and dilated at length

upon his certainty that he knew all the righteous rules of life, of drama, of democracy, of domesticity and of disinfectants, the last two being favourite hobbies, somewhat trying in their practice to those who tended him.

He was accounted to be a romantic rover, but actually he was devoted to his own home, and he would delight in interviewing the dustman, making personal appeals to his cook, playing mayor in the mews, and inscribing on blackboards prohibitions to tradesmen, beggars or organ-grinders. His reputation as Lothario rather pleased him, although it was mainly based upon his affection for one wife of one friend, two wives of his own not simultaneous, and the occasional companionship of a certain flirtatious flibbertigibbet who summed up the affair, "Quite harmless; two years' daily cycling round the park with Cecil Raleigh—total asset, one new bicycle bell."

As a matter of fact Cecil Raleigh was no casual giver of gifts, but I have known him help most generously an enfranchised prisoner of undoubted guilt. He had no great opinion of women, but he exacted their services greedily, and obtained their devotion without much effort, while he resented those who were clever as deeply as he was bored by those who were not.

I was happily associated with him in the production of *White Heather*, for Arthur Collins invited me to assist in designing the costumes which were to grace one scene on the Scotch moors, and another at Boulter's Lock in the summer-time. There were no less than ninety frocks altogether, and I was given a free hand in their detail. I thought it would be a commission after my own heart, and to my complete

capacity, but I do not believe that I did it particularly well, being anxious to obtain diversity in style with harmony in colour for the groups ; and although Arthur Collins was most kind, I rather failed with the girls who resented me, and would sulk should I object to a hat placed back to front or poised sideways four inches above the hair. However, under the hand of Arthur Collins, who upheld firmly my ruling, the ultimate result was pronounced good, and the ultimate cheque supremely satisfactory with its accompanying letter of thanks.

But this intrusion into *White Heather* was not my first introduction behind the scenes of Drury Lane. I had stood there with Augustus Harris when Arthur Collins was indispensably efficient adjutant, and it was "Collins" here, "Collins" there and "Collins" everywhere during the dress rehearsal of a ballet in a pantomime, while I was acting as special reporter on Court trains cleverly contrived from curtain net and cretonne.

In whatever direction I might endeavour to persuade my pen to wander, I was never disassociated from Dress in the mind of any, and I was never allowed to desert that first love.

Occasionally I met with criticism, even the accusation of being over-prodigious, and a dangerous influence in economics, a menace to the more frugal proprieties.

Long before the Boer war I had been taken to task for these sins.

I was visited one day by a female representative of an admirable provincial journal. She was incidentally a philanthropist, and one of the worst-dressed women I had ever seen. She called to impress upon me the

error of my ways. She admonished me something like this :

“ Women read your alluring accounts of gorgeous elegance and regardless of the small incomes of their husbands and the many claims upon them they are attracted by the desire to buy clothes they cannot afford, and disaster to home and happiness is the inevitable result. Now, as a woman who works for the help of the many, I come to you to implore you to give up this wicked folly of yours. It is doing incalculable harm, and so far as I can see no good.”

There was the rub. “ So far as she could see.” But she could see such a very little distance. She could not see how large a part dress plays in the general scheme of beauty, nor how important a factor it is in international commerce, nor how it agitates in our home industries ; she could not see that temptation might afford women an excellent chance of practising self-denial ; and she could not recognise that even while I lingered lovingly in a fairyland of Fashion, and summoned all the adjectives I knew to describe the most magnificent costumes, I always advocated that every woman should be guided rather by her bank balance than by an overdraft, and that, above all, she should as anxiously consider what is becoming to her position as to her person.

While I had put these points to my visitor I could not help noting that the short tops of her laced boots, being too large for her ankles, revealed some hideous grey worsted stockings, above which a striped yellow and brown petticoat hung assertive and unashamed. I observed, too, that the back of her blouse was querulously striving to separate itself from her skirt,

that her collar was slightly at one side, and that, while her tie was unpinned, her hat was transfixed with no less than six pins, their points sticking out at different angles on each side of her head. To me she was the beastly example.

I forgave her an absurd interview which she printed ultimately, and proceeded unabashed upon my offending way, gladly taking the opportunity to play the dressing part in *White Heather*, while Cecil Raleigh was a constant source of entertainment. Arthur Collins was splendidly first, and I had much instruction from both in the intricate secrets of stage craft.

The small tank of live fish, which by means of magnifying lights did duty as environment to a submarine fight between two divers, was a revelation of expert ingenuity, but I never had chance to brave a canvas avalanche or suffer a salted earthquake.

Arthur Collins was one of the few managers to dwell perpetually in the country, and an observer has said of him, "In the summer he plays croquet until it is time for billiards or bridge, and bridge or billiards until it is time for croquet again, complaining bitterly that the early birds will spoil his slumbers and upset his strokes."

Cecil Raleigh thought he knew all about acting, about stage-managing, and scenic effect on the technical side, and he was prepared at a moment's notice to jump on the boards and demonstrate this efficiency.

He had a favourite theory which he hoped might shock. "I look upon Shakespeare as the tall hat of English literature, constantly affected by people who don't like him because they regard him as the outward and visible sign of intellectual respectability."

Cecil Raleigh was the first dramatist to combine the film with the spoken word in *The Diamond Express*, produced in the Coliseum's inaugurating bill.

But he was conscious of his limitations in literature, and no sincerity went to his love-making, so that when writing in collaboration with Henry Hamilton he would wisely delegate this to him with any "bit of pathos" he thought necessary to his tale, while he supplied liberally the surprising sensation and the repartee essential to the "smart" lady or the comic underling, never omitted from the cast.

He was an incorrigible *farceur*, and once in an interval of scene-shifting he sat with me in the empty stalls gravely refuting my charge of cynicism by a story of unrequited affection. He related how he had approached a young matron of our mutual acquaintance.

"What do you say to a few days at the Ship Hotel, Brighton?"

The answer being in the negative, I should guess he had astonished the object of his dalliance with his careless resignation, as he announced it to me.

"All right, perhaps you know best. Good-bye, I have no time for wooing."

Some might have misinterpreted the narrative as an insult even in the telling, but to me it was intensely funny, if not exactly establishing Cecil's claim to tenderness. I could so easily visualise the circumstances, the little sniff of its accompaniment with a cigarette tapped to its best conduct, heralding the swift departure to wheel round the inner circle which was Cecil's unchangeable habit for several hours daily.

"I believe the world at its end will find you on your machine encompassing the park," I would hazard; but

his world came to an end very shortly afterwards. He fell a victim to throat trouble, which he had been trying to benefit at Folkestone, where I last saw him after he had filled my room with flowers in glad greeting. Poor Cecil ! he seems yet to haunt that corner of Brunswick Place where he so faithfully lingered. Many other memories for me lurk here, each stone of the pavement has been trodden by the feet of those I have known and liked.

Here often have I walked and talked with Alfred Sutro, in devoted attendance upon a superb sheep-dog, mud-laden from his colossal tree-trunkish legs up to his burly grey and white chest. Little chance of serious converse with Alfred Sutro when he is accompanied by a dog. The youngest and prettiest of us would get poor grace. It is a complete lesson in the science of animal-loving to watch Alfred Sutro look at a dog and a dog look at Alfred Sutro. He beams through gold-framed glasses, it responds with suffused eyes. Dramatist does not pat dog, nor dog dramatist, but each knows the other as a thoroughly good fellow, and both are right.

The strange case of Alfred Sutro, writer of plays, is his whole-hearted acknowledgment of the dramatic talent of others, holding in special reverence Pinero, and being little worried about the parlous state of the legitimate drama, and always the perfect optimist on its prominent place in permanent politics. Add to this Alfred Sutro's disapproval of physical pain for others, his confirmed belief in the good influence of the good player at Bridge, his definite leaning towards lovely woman, his irrepressible raillery at the *genus* snob, and there you have the man as I know and

admire him ; even, yes even when he tells me one of those stories about a dog which is almost as hard to swallow comfortably as others which hang on the fisherman's line.

At Brunswick Place again I first knew the remarkable Milholland family, meeting them at Madame Novikoff's, and instinctively hailing them at once as comrades.

John E., the father, was one of the first editors, before the powerful days of Whitelaw Reid, of the *New York Tribune*, and his wife was Jean of stately mien, and fine examples of the new world were their youngsters Inez and Veda and " little " John as I yet call him, although he measures some six feet two.

John Milholland, senior, had the head of a lion, the heart of a lamb, the simple faith of a Quaker and the complicated brain of all the best American financiers ; odd, bewildering compound, but incidentally he was very handsome and inclined to flatter.

He spent many years in England whilst trying to persuade different Governments of the advantages of his pneumatic tube postal service, and then in despair and maybe disgust at their unintelligent miscomprehension of his point of view, he devoted himself exclusively to Philadelphia, resting from his labours occasionally at his birthplace in the Adirondacks, where already my visit is a decade overdue.

Much of the pride and joy of the lives of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Milholland went with the death of their daughter Inez, who gave her beautiful young life to the political cause, starting upon an extensive tour to lecture when she was already ill. How lovely she was when I first saw her with the complete grace of an

unchipped Greek goddess, and excelling at all sports, while she was flirting outrageously with Fabianism and had caught Suffrage in its most mad moments. She was ever adorably feminine in her obstinacy, and in face and figure she was very like her mother, one of the most elegant well possessed of Paquin, and easily to be pictured as a social leader. But Inez had no such ambition, she was just rabid on the woman question, which she put and answered and fought with typical energy from her early days at Vassar College.

She marched through the streets of London in the first procession convened to claim a hearing for the Vote ; and, mounted on a white horse in New York, she led the shirt-waist strikers with such enthusiasm that the special pleading she had imbibed to serve her as barrister was in full use before the police-court judge was persuaded of her right to incite her fellows to free rebellion should she desire to do so.

She was an enterprising sportswoman was the all-compelling Inez, and she married a delightful Dutch gentleman, a traveller she met when crossing over to this side.

She consulted nobody ; she wished to marry him, and despite some difficulty in the way, owing to the difference of their nationalities, she gained her cause in a morning, and the afternoon of that day found me on the balcony of Mrs. Milholland's house in Prince of Wales Terrace endeavouring, with the help of Signor Marconi, to console her mother and compose a cable to her adoring father, absent in New York.

Marconi, simple, sincere and charming creature, projected a dozen schemes to soften the blow, even he

would go back to America to break the news personally; he was always a loyal friend, and he bore a great regard for the Milhollands. However, time worked its usual miracles, and John Milholland became reconciled, even attached to his son-in-law, reflecting no doubt as worshipping parents will that no man could have been deserving of such honour as the hand of their daughter.

One of the strangest social affairs I ever attended was at that house of the Milhollands, Mrs. Milholland for that occasion being in America and John E. host on his own. Thoroughly soaked in the spirit of universal brotherhood (he had indeed sacrificed much political position for his belief in the equality of Black with White), he was distributing hospitality to a company of many colours—white, brown, black and yellow—and including boldly the loyal and the seditious from China, from India, from West, East and South Africa.

Speeches were made to air various grievances and to cavil at England as colonist, and William T. Stead took the chair, or at least he took the corner of the sofa, where he lolled at ease, sitting on either side of the fence as demanded by the eloquence and the best traditions of well-balanced loyalty. A Zulu and a Boer in flagrant hate towards Great Britain had numerous wrongs to voice, and Lady Solomon, who was present, seemed to understand them all, if not to condone them all.

An English Protestant clergyman uprose to declare that only those who had lived with coloured races could imagine the difficulties of dealing justice to them, and that for his part he admitted candidly he

had gone out in full prejudice that they were oppressed, and he had come home convinced of the amazing toleration of their treatment.

"Persecution never yet produced progress" was a dogma delivered by an educated magnate of Liberia, to be answered by my sister Julia, a most reluctant orator, that "Jews have flourished beneath it."

"Be a sportsman," urged my host in a loud voice, "and take a black man down to supper."

The black man appointed smiled with condescension upon my invitation and showed me lovely white teeth, but no hint whatever of his sense of the honour I was supposed to be doing him. He spoke admirable English, and had no excuse for this reticence, so I asked him :

"Do you resent being called a black man ?"

Another grin while he shook his head. "No, you all amuse me very much."

I demanded of Stead later what this might mean really, much revolutionary rumour being popular, and Stead just wagged his beard in reply, and quoted some portentous paragraph which he had contributed in the last issue of his beloved *Review of Reviews*.

W. T. Stead had been the hero of a hundred fights, and was possessed of a personality well armoured to the attack of feminine curiosity.

"An angel with an eye to business" he had been defined with some humour but with little excuse, for a martyrdom in prison after playing Crusader in the cause of virgin purity was no optical delusion, but a sorry fate which had befallen him ; and small comfort to follow in writing of his experience, albeit he was Jehovah amongst journalists and a man of most

unusual gifts, with a deep reverence for all things holy, and some psychic extension to his unfaltering faith.

Never were eyes so blue, so piercing, as Stead's, the heavens at their brightest steel plated : and his soft white hair above, and soft white beard below his pink cheeks, gave him the air of a highly discriminating dove, or a hawk from the best celestial circles. He uplifted his chin as he spoke, and his open mouth revealed his nonconformist outlook on dental convention, while he laid much emphasis on the blessedness of his own married state, and evinced much inquisitiveness about mine. He was a zealot for the good of the multitude, yet I could never believe the story that he had once "put his arms round the waist of a wife while imploring her to be faithful to her husband."

He was magnetic in his addresses, but they would border on the verbose, yet he had many worshipping disciples, faithful adorers, who felt he could neither do nor say wrong ; and none were more persuaded of his tremendous intellect, worth and influence in England and on the Continent, where he played diplomat, than was John E. Milholland.

One evening under his auspices Stead and I again met, and I was immensely struck by a pronouncement of his which followed arguments over the world's likely condition half a century onward.

No one had shed much light upon the possible evolutions, though many had put forth opinions at tiresome length.

Stead, in his might, summed up to illuminate chance.

"We must calculate upon the two greatest influences, Jews and airships."

Pretty good that, so many years ago ; and now Lord Reading is Viceroy of India, Sir Herbert Samuel stands for England in Palestine, and the airship's flight to fame and victory overrides all the discovered and undiscovered countries of the universe.

" We who are about to sail salute you," reads John E. Milholland's last telegram—and to satisfy my hunger for sentimentality, as Americans will, he added :

" Your wire arrived ; was it written upon the lid of the refrigerator ? "

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT HENRY IRVING

I DO not know to what beneficent fairy I owed my first introduction to Henry Irving. I suspected some late defaulting guest : anyway, I was summoned by telephone to Prince's Restaurant to enjoy the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ellis, whom I had known from my childhood, when he was a writer of plays and the proprietor of the *Court Circular*, and she united amiability with other social graces which led to many happy evenings in their house at St. John's Wood.

Whenever I turned my face towards Henry Irving during that portentous evening meal, and I was high-placed next to him, those verses by Browning recurred to me insistently :

“ Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again ?
How strange it seems and new !

But you were living before that
And also you are living after ;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about :

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle feather !
Well, I forget the rest."

Lucky that I was embarrassed to dumbness, so that Irving was spared their recitation at my tongue.

Irving's personality overwhelmed me against his will and mine, yet he was quite simple, as the truly great are, and he gave attention to my affairs rather than to his own.

But then his greeting, "How are you?" unlike the greetings of others, never enclosed the thought, "How am I?"

That evening I must have been the dullest neighbour, although encouraged gently to some measure of confidence by a sympathetic nod now and again, when he questioned, "Have you a husband and children?" to be made aware of my sad glad state. Irving listened with apparent pleasure when, in the name of all the Jews, I ventured to thank him for his representation of Shylock.

Yet the awe of him was strong upon me, and I approached more comfortably to Beatty Kingston, who sat on my right full of his recently published *Monarchs I have Met*, so that I enquired of him, impudently enough, the best method to obtain success in journalism. He was a master of the craft, and gave immediate answer, "You should travel"; very sound advice too, but difficult to bring to fruition.

The monarch I had just met persisted amiably until I recovered my self-possession to take my normal notice of elegance in costume, to admire his jutting collar which separated widely to display his square

chin, and to observe the unusual narrowness of his sleeves from elbow to wrist, deliberate accentuation of his slender, graceful hands.

My courage rose even to the protestation of my absorbing love for the theatre and my ungratified desire to see him in *Waterloo*.

"Where do you live?" he asked, and I told him of Brunswick Place as my dwelling, whilst I added, "next door to the French Convent, where the Sisters wearing beautiful blue veils walk up and down in a garden."

"Um," he mused aloud, "I am sure you do not wish it had been a monastery."

Thus I believe we crossed the first quarter of an inch of the way to mutual interest, and yet another was overstepped when the evening came to an end, with some of the assembled ladies claiming their right to embrace him. I watched the progress of kissing-time to catch his whimsical glance, just a spark to light me to comprehension of that keen humour which was so delightfully his.

The morning after brought me evidence of his remembrance in a note containing two stalls for *Waterloo*. My mother was prodigiously pleased by that note, telling the day's visitors of its contents, which ran:

"Nothing much to see, but a pleasure to know you will be present."

I missed through diffidence that chance given to write and express my supreme delight in his performance as Corporal Brewster, late of the 3rd Guards, and I did not meet Henry Irving again until some months later when, persuaded by the picturesque poetry and prose of Clement Scott, I was staying at



MY DAUGHTER NITA AT THE AGE OF 15.

Cromer whilst he, with his son Laurence, was at Sheringham preparing the scenes for *Peter the Great*.

"Fine work that for a boy," he would declare and declare again whilst we sat on the hillside near the Links Hotel after the ceremony of his first visit to me had disappeared in the constant practice of his coming.

Sheringham is situated a few miles from Cromer, and the horsed equipage of the time made it the convenient Mecca for tea.

Shall I ever forget that first arrival which I had proposed by telegram : so nervously I sat on the verandah watching alternately my young daughter in elaborate gyrations on a bicycle and the grey-hatted passenger in the double-horsed landau approaching up the winding road to the open front door, where a pompous porter and a bowing manager held themselves in readiness to express the honour the proprietors felt.

"That's all right," he demurred, as he made his way towards my approach, no doubt quite aware of my trepidation.

"Shall I have any power to amuse him" was the undercurrent of my mind, "and will he soon be sorry he came and make some transparent excuse for leaving?" I was amazed at my audacity in inviting him.

I need not have been uneasy, his tact and kindness would always tempt him to say most emphatically, "Very interesting" at the moments when he was superlatively bored.

Irving was a man of few words, he never used half a dozen when four would serve, and three were the average allotment to the casual acquaintance, significant sounds intervening to fill any blanks.

I have been told that when Jowett met Irving, who

came to Oxford to express his approval of the foundation of the O.U.D.S., everyone was anxious to know what each thought of the other. Irving, when approached, hesitated, "Um, reserved I should say."

Jowett assailed for his opinion replied, "He seems to think more than to speak."

I am almost as irritated now by reports of Irving's reckless verbosity as I am by the entirely fictitious pathos of his saying good-bye with his cat to the stage door of the Lyceum Theatre. The animal left days before he did, while Irving was rejoicing mightily at an opportunity to sever himself from the Limited Company, which had been founded upon his name; indeed he had joyfully paid £26,000 to be released from the toils.

Again my indignation is aroused by narratives which would portray him as sentimentalist, an eager orator on trivial topics and a gay familiar to his friends and associates. Though his letters and his telegrams were cordial, even affectionate, he rarely addressed anybody by a Christian name: invariably he used surnames. Toole, his closest comrade, was never "Johnnie" to him; Joe Parkinson, a very old friend, and chairman of the Reform Club, was always "Parkinson"; Walter Collinson, his most trusted attendant, was alone "Walter" to his constant calling. Never was Pinero "Arthur," nor Hatton "Joe," nor Stoker "Bram," nor Tree "Herbert." When he spoke of Ellen Terry he called her Miss Terry, rarely failing to add "a God-gifted creature." Yet in many printed pages all these and more have been given intimate names by him.

This is a small matter but indicative of the lies which

spring up round the great dead, and of the truth of the dictum, "What everybody says nobody knows."

Assuredly very few knew Irving, though many relate with gusto of long interviews with him, when they had given him counsel on productions and scenery, on the actors he should engage and those he should dismiss. "Henry, you should have produced *Ibsen*" is of that I-said-to-him category, recently enraging me from the mouth of a man who would scarcely have had the pluck to bid him good morning.

Irving was unconsciously formidable and detached. His mien and his manners were different from others, and his face modelled upon super-ecclesiastical lines set him apart from ordinary walkers by the ordinary way.

His right environments were rocks in Cornwall, or Gothic cloisters, or dark oak screens, beneath a high-framed roof curving to dim walls where ancient stained-glass windows in stone frames stretch their jewelled lengths to catch the sunbeams.

He looked like all the best bishops ought to look, and once when he was recuperating at Margate after a severe illness, and we had driven out to Canterbury to meet Dean Farrar, I gazed at them standing together upon those fatal steps where Becket was murdered, and I was struck by the undoubted fact that the Dean might so well have been the actor and the actor the Dean.

I remember the Dean afterwards suggested tea at the Deanery, and a return to the Cathedral later to hear him preach; but Irving's delicate health prohibited an acceptance of the invitation, and as we drove away he said how much he had wanted to remain,

adding modestly, "I think he would have liked it too."

He smiled when I hazarded, "No doubt he would, as you would have desired that he should hear your Louis XI had he strayed within the precincts of the Lyceum Theatre."

But this adventure was far in advance of our foregathering at Cromer. However, the course of true narrative never runs quite straight, and my best critic carps at my parenthetical crime in mere conversation, so I proceed unabashed to justify my divergence, in recalling that the first time I ever saw Irving in a Cathedral was at Norwich, where he made pilgrimage from Cromer with Sir John and Lady Hare, their daughter and their son and his wife, who were in residence at the hotel.

Sir John was an ardent devotee to croquet and his lady a dignified and beautiful devotee to Sir John. Other distinguished amongst us were two Siamese princes, younger brothers of the present King. Purachatra, the elder, was a most genial youth, Ugala, the younger, being less fluent in English, showed some timidity, but both would join my daughter and the other youngsters in the hall where an absurd game of retrieving potatoes in spoons to an accompaniment of wild laughter was the order of the evenings.

Oddly enough my daughter went to Bangkok on her marriage to a Government official there, and Prince Purachatra reminded her of this previous meeting. They came across each other once more in London, when during the war he had been denied his desire to fight for England, and he voiced his disappointment over our teacups, whilst an inquisitive score of urchins

waited round his little square car to gaze in wonderment at the Siamese chauffeur, hatless, and undaunted by their curiosity.

It seems a long way back to Cromer where Irving and I and Laurence sat so many mornings discussing the scenes, the circumstance and the cast for *Peter the Great*.

"What about a less gloomy conclusion?" dared Irving once to Laurence's distress.

"No, no," he cried, "we must not pander, the rebellious son was murdered, and we cannot hope Peter was remorseful."

I listened, considerably proud of my privilege, whilst Irving read a scene or so and Laurence sat glowing with hope, but never interrupting except to assure his father that the only actress in the world who could play Euphrosyne, the young heroine, was Ethel Barrymore, and he would smile complacently as he pronounced his verdict, for he was deeply in love with Ethel Barrymore.

When Irving and I skirted warily round the golf links we often met Lord Suffield, and he would engage Irving in conversation to direct his attention to some adjoining land as a good investment, Lord Suffield at that time being possessed of many "sites"—desirable to dispose of. He was, however, more amusing when he was relating his experience at the palace of Potsdam where the Empress Frederick was laying out English gardens without much applause from her German people. Further, he gave us virile accounts of his guidance of the beautiful ill-fated Empress of Austria, through the difficult etiquette of the English hunting-field.

Fussie, the terrier I disliked because my soup would grow cold in its bowl whilst his appetite was coaxed, was our invariable follower, although retrieving sticks and stones did not improve his cough nor ease his slight limp. Irving was devoted to the little beast, and would never have another dog after he died. Laurence always declared that Fussie crept away and committed suicide through a hole in the scenery because his father spoke crossly to him during rehearsal. I hope he rests in peace, but he was stuffed outside all canine recognition, so that he vanished from sight to remain dear to memory.

As Irving and I walked at the slowest pace towards Overstrand we often fell to talking of Clement Scott and of his supreme knowledge of the art of acting. Clement Scott and I had drifted into friendship under the auspices of David Anderson, who founded a school of journalism after proving his rights to presidency by his political leaders in *The Daily Telegraph*.

I had conceived a tremendous admiration for Clement Scott when I had been sent to interview him, and he had greeted me with, "Never mind about the interview. I will write that for you. Let me show you a casket just arrived with the message of the Pope, and then I will read to you *The Triumph of Time*." Very well he read it too, beneath the light of candles, flaming high and steady in the stand of ecclesiastical convention.

I had great respect for Clement Scott for his facility to write rapidly an illuminating criticism, and I was by no means impervious either to his personal charm. "You like Scott?" asked Irving with a special concern, for some controversy was then raging fiercely

around his attack upon the morality of the stage, and Irving was ever a passionate protectionist of his calling.

"You think that he's a good chap?" he queried, and we argued about that punctuating with "fitful," "emotional," "enthusiastic" our walk to the "Garden of Sleep" which had inspired Clement Scott to verses arriving at an incurable popularity, when enhanced by the music of Isidore de Lara.

Most of the tower of the "Garden of Sleep" has toppled over into the sea, but I possess an etching done previous to its last moments. Churches and windmills prevail in Norfolk, but the miller at Overstrand was sturdy in his refusal to listen to the entreaties of the vicar that he should worship in the ordained precincts.

"Noa," he would say, "God can hear me well enough from my garden."

Irving nodded his acquiescence when he heard the argument, while he was leaning over the gate at the old mill-house where Swinburne had written, and he was bending towards a great bed of flaunting yellow flowers to express his perpetual joy in vivid colour.

Often, as he went on his way down those high-hedged lanes, he would note the courtesy of the villagers and gain confidence even from the tramps, the stone-breakers and the gipsies. He would seem to possess some kinship with all strollers, and in solitary wanderings he would sometimes stay his footsteps by an old vagabond who would offer a share of a mug of cold tea with a lump of bread. Irving had the instinct when not to give money as surely as he possessed the desire to give it.

There obtains a story from the North when his

munificence had been somewhat unfortunate. Desiring to go out upon the sea for a couple of hours, he hired one Tom and a boat to his pleasure, rewarding the toiler with no less than five pounds which he had deemed so well expended that eight days afterwards he thought he would repeat the experiment. Sending down to the beach for Tom, he was informed, "Tom can't come out, sir, he's been a-bed for a week past."

On a desolate little moor in Norfolk there was a strange little shanty where a poor old crone held rights over oddments of china, tambourines, sweets and tobacco, and straw chairs.

"Pretty teapot," he pointed out to me, a blue and white specimen of an old-fashioned shape.

"That belonged to my grandmother; I don't know as how I want to sell it."

"Might be worth two pounds," reflected Irving aloud.

"May be I had best let you 'ave your way and buy it."

The deal came to a conclusion, and as I was watching the progress of the packing the reluctant seller patronised me with :

"Nice gentleman you've got, mum."

I remonstrated, "Do you not know who he is? That is Henry Irving, the great actor."

"Lor," she jerked as she knifed the string viciously, "'im an actor, and he looks so 'appy too."

Evidently her opinion of the theatre was a mean one : and in another part of Norfolk a no more flattering view seemed to prevail, for at an inn at North Walsham the parlourmaid, recognising her customer, took occasion to confide to me :

"I wanted to go on the stage once, but my father he says to me, 'Don't you dare or I'll put you in an orphan asylum.'"

Irving was wont to declare that I made up such stories for his entertainment, but this was a false accusation; everywhere we went produced some incident fraught with fun.

We took one very long drive, when Laurence was with us again, and we stopped at a farm-house for tea, which the hostess prepared with such care that to please her we pretended to enjoy ploughing through soddened acres of empty fields interrupted by shabby barns and soiled pigsties. As she and I went back to the parlour Irving whispered, "I should like to give her something; she is a good creature, some books perhaps: find out what she would like."

I made the enquiry, and promising a signed photograph, proposed, "Would you like some books?"

She replied decisively, "No, thank you, I have one."

My thoughts flowed reverentially.

"We take to it at Christmas-time." I was the more impressed by the certainty that book was the Bible; I could see it in its black binding, gold-lettered, all tenderly lifted from its shelf, and I was rather cast down by her concluding:

"It is *East Lynne*: have you heard of it? We read it aloud in the winters when it is too dark to work."

In the landau later I recounted my miscarried mission. "*East Lynne, East Lynne*," repeated Irving, "strange," and he fell at once to telling me that provincial theatres presented the play continually.

Laurence, all contempt, and knitting his brows

severely as if in self-reproach, "They ought to be taught better."

Laurence was very serious on the didactic duty of the drama, and as we drove home while I watched him slip into meditation, it seemed to me that in the future he might grow to greater likeness to his father.

"Lovely house over there," I directed attention to a red-roofed building in a deep cup of trees backgrounded by the shoulder of a hill, indigo in the twilight.

"Damp," decided Irving.

"Dull," proclaimed Laurence, and I recognised that at least the monosyllabic method was common to them both.

But Irving had more expansive moods, and no incident of our sojourn in Norfolk stands more distinctly in my mental vision than his reading of *Manfred* during a terrific thunderstorm.

His sitting-room at the hotel, being on a high floor, had to endure the full force of the elements. The windows rattled violently as if determined, come what may, they would be released from their frames; loud thunder faithfully followed the lightning, which zig-zagged across a darkling crack in a dusty mirror over the mantelpiece beneath which gusts of smoke belched towards the table to blur to purple the crimson flowers in a brazen bowl; and through the din, the snores of Fussie, the screaming sirens and the loud moanings of the sea came Irving's impressive tones to thrill me with the agonies of a soul in hell.

"Well, shall I do it?" awoke me from the awful depths he had conjured. "Might be fine." He revelled in the prospect, but never developed it.



"Look at Mita!" what a
 new thing she is - "5"
 says her young man
 Jimmy: 1829

A LEAF TORN FROM MY DAUGHTER'S AUTOGRAPH BOOK

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Of course Irving's presence in Cromer provoked the astute in the philanthropic direction, and the Cottage Hospital stood forth as a plausible excuse for a concert where the younger visitors should play highwayman's part with the programme, which might be relied upon to include a beautiful amateur in song, a devoted couple in a contentious dialogue, a brilliant boy desecrating Bach, with other items equally alarming to be suffered in all charity.

Irving recited "The Dream of Eugene Aram" and "The Uncle," his favourite selections for such occasions. The wealthy came from miles around, shepherded by Robert Fenner, doctor to the hospital, and he and I attained some sympathy with each other through his attitude of respect and admiration for Irving, who gave his holiday hours so generously with other evidence of his determination to help any helpless. But Irving disliked a prolonged holiday, only taking one at all through the exigencies of business or for the good of his company. He endured inactivity bravely for a week, but after that he counted the hours wasted until he could get back to the theatre, and he chafed always under any order of quiet or repose which he knew full well he needed.

He played steadfastly the game of life, being of an indomitable courage and zeal. When at work he never thought of himself, giving to the best of his power to the last inch of his ability. Of his stupendous will power many instances have been quoted, none more convincing than his keeping punctually a social engagement after a doctor had let slip a seven-inch-long metal instrument down his gullet to some unrecoverable distance.

Surgeons were talked of, and the offender was frantic with remorse and the possible results of his carelessness. Irving had indeed to comfort him, and could only do so by promising to see a specialist. "Later in the day," he pledged. "I have an appointment to keep now," and he kept it, making light of his mishap, which happily culminated without damage during a violent cough. It is known that Irving sent the blunderer a double fee, and hoped he had not taken the matter too seriously.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOUT HENRY IRVING

“**Y**OU don’t know my boy Harry,” said Irving on the stage of the Lyceum Theatre, where we had been bidden to supper on the first night of *Peter the Great*, and I looked up from my Gunter’s chicken sandwich to see that wonderful pair standing together, the father’s hand on the son’s arm, whilst his voice held challenge, “I dare you not to like each other.”

We not alone liked each other, but I am happy in the belief that we loved each other, and the agreement to do so was drawn up and signed and sealed by Dorothea, Harry Irving’s wife, who has been and is to me amongst my nearest and my dearest, whose sympathy never fails me, whose simple sincerity makes upright mark on whatever path she treads.

Under Harry’s guidance that night I took my first peep into the famous Beef Steak room where all the notabilities, foreign potentates, ambassadors, poets and prima donnas, explorers and travellers, with Prime Ministers and Royal Princes and Princesses had at some time gathered to endorse the far-spread tale of Irving’s hospitality.

The walls were hung with famous pictures, none as vitally interesting to me as Whistler’s gallant presentation of Irving as Phillip II, which is now in the

possession of America, and Sargent's picture of Ellen Terry, a red-tressed Lady Macbeth, all aglow in green and gold and jewels, and now gracing the Tate Gallery. Madame Vestris in a carved and gilded frame was another gem, although the signature Thomas Lawrence has since been questioned ; and there were dramatic landscapes by Frank Miles, and scenes in Venice by Cattermole, and a dozen more giving testimony to the labour of well-known hands. I investigated with considerable respect twelve feet of hand-woven linen thickly embroidered in golden squares which enclosed the name of every character Irving had enacted ; this had been used as a cloth at banquets when the number of guests spread to the stage, and I reflected upon the love, industry and skill which had gone to its making.

Peter the Great had only a sentimental success, its "takings," to use the language of the box office, did not total within thousands of the cost of its splendid production, and in spite of the facts that Queen Alexandra commanded a special performance, and an acre of print hailed its historical and literary value, it was allowed but a short period to fret its hour upon the boards.

Only a full house satisfied Irving, who, for Laurence's sake, was bitterly disappointed, even angry, that the play did not attain wide popularity.

"Like it ? Yes, they like it, but they don't come," he would say, and an old programme was reinstated to a better record whilst waiting for *The Medicine Man*, which was the joint work of H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens, the latter telling me in confidence during rehearsals, "All the good there is in it Irving put there."

When in town Irving took few hours away from his theatre, but a very beautiful morning might tempt him to a drive to Hampstead Heath, a favourite spot of his when the hawthorn was in bloom, and here we were once followed by two inquisitive little boys, endeavouring to recall his face and where they had seen him.

"I know, Jim," said the smaller triumphantly. "He's the boulder what plays *The Bells*": not quite an adequate description, but Irving enjoyed it immensely.

We paid frequent visits to my daughter at school near town, and here took place the rare ceremony of christening a recently purchased pig, Irving standing godfather.

"Handsome," he said, peering over into the sty.

"Not so 'andsome as you, Sir 'enry," ventured an obsequious stockman.

"I suppose not," he chuckled, and all regardless of the proprieties due to the sex of a pig, he gave the animal the name of Portia. It is to be hoped that he grew to play finely his different parts as ham, pork and bacon.

We were driving through Richmond Park on one occasion when the coachman turned on his seat to point with his whip at antlers crouching in a little herd in the distance.

"Deer, Sir Henry."

"I suppose so," was vouchsafed.

That coachman was a queer character in the employment of a near livery stable, and not the sole property of Irving, who kept no carriage of his own. He would invariably take upon himself to act as host

in any country we were passing through ; he would introduce Irving to the sheep, the rabbits, the bridges, the goats and the ponds. I fancy his name was Harris, an unimportant item, but I met him by chance long afterwards, and asked whether he would take me out to a dinner-party ; he touched his hat with solemnity, saying :

“ I shouldn’t like to be driving you now, Mum, I’ve got a regular job with an undertaker.”

Unless a social claim persisted, or the weather proved too abominable to be faced, Irving and I drove together every Sunday either to Harrow or to Richmond, to Epping Forest, to Norwood, or to Barnet, and occasionally in the spring-time Harry would accompany us. After the initial ceremony, seldom omitted by these two, of stigmatising critics as “ a hard-boiled lot,” they agreed to find their fair treatment difficult, because an expressed distrust would condemn the artist as suffering from well-merited rebuke, and enthusiasm for their work in their presence would be open to suspicion of trying to beguile the judge and corrupt the executioner.

This being settled, father and son would sit opposite to each other, Harry upright, Irving deep down in the corner of the carriage, and become absorbed in tales of awful crimes, the most ingenious murder was supremely to their taste, the bloodier the better, the most artful and deliberate the best, the technique of the affair being the supreme point for argument.

Harry listened while Irving told of the old Thurtell and Weare case, with pork chops for supper while the poor corpse was chivied from pond to sack and sack to chaise ; and Harry in his turn enchanted his father

with the psychology of Charles Peace, commenting with considerable ability upon the value of the procedure of French law, and remarking how strange it was in the histories of all crimes to find that no villain was without a feminine companion, who loved him very dearly despite or because of his unmitigated brutality.

Both men looked whimsically to me for some explanation not forthcoming, but I quoted :

“ She was a harlot and he was a thief,
But they loved each other beyond belief.”

“ Women do not love men for what they are, but for what they think they are or hope they may become to them exclusively. We make and fit your haloes,” I laughed.

That murder held irresistible attraction for Irving was often proved in his work, but he would invest the most abominable wretch with some tender touch of redemption. “ Shylock ” he declared to be “ the only gentleman in the *Merchant of Venice*,” and by accentuating the pathos of his loneliness he persuaded us to believe him.

Mathias in *The Bells* was the kindest of fathers, the most benevolent of citizens ; the dastardly Dubosc was drink-sodden and hunger-driven to his crimes ; Macbeth was a visionary and never an assassin, and when Irving recited “ The Dream of Eugene Aram ” he artfully contrived by the misery he dealt him to get our sympathy for the haunted schoolmaster.

But I do not dwell upon Irving’s subtle acting, which was always magnetic and earned universal acknowledgment, his work and his genius are for others to acclaim. I felt ever when listening to him, on or

off the boards, his morally elevating tendency, his possession of the highest ideals, and the true æstheticism which was his with an artistic intellectual completeness.

He had in his desk a modern play on murder, and he often showed some desire to enact the hero, who had been falsely imprisoned as a murderer in the first act, and was liberated to become one in the following act, when he discovered his wife had been driven by hunger into the hands of a "bully," threatening the happiness of his daughter, and driving his son into bright red Socialism.

I was much in favour of this when he read it to me, and regretted his unalterable decision that he was too old to present such sordid pictures. He inclined then exclusively to sweetness and to light.

My mother and my family grew devoted to Irving, never unmindful of the honour he did us by his friendship, and I recall Julia's telegram after our first meeting in Cromer: "Grapple him to your soul with hooks of steel." But such violent counsel was scarcely due, for his intimacy with us was so soon established that he would come in at odd hours and all unexpected, would occasionally find an incongruous party assembled. On one merry morning in May there was a group of gossiping women present whilst he and my mother sat on opposite sides of the fireplace, her gold-rimmed spectacles pushed up on to her forehead, whilst his pince-nez had slipped half-way down his nose. The room hummed with discussion on the peccadilloes of a well-born girl, who had been indiscreet in her outgoings and homecomings, in her letters and in her boon companions.

"What do you think about her, Sir Henry?" said

my mother, looking over her glasses which she held an inch away from her eyes.

Irving pressed the steel arch of his firmly across the bridge of his nose, and made monumental reply.

“Strumpet, madam.”

James was ever prone to wonder how Irving could endure my flippancy, but on the strength of that belief he ventured to explain to him that his writing for the stage held no other purpose than to fill his pockets. Irving remonstrated with him, and assured him of his ability to achieve something better, if yet upon the same lines he pursued.

“No, no,” said James. “I am not rich enough to make experiments,” and he added with a twinkle, “You see, Sir Henry, I’m out for the box office and you for a tomb in Westminster Abbey.”

Irving shook his head indulgently, whilst deciding :

“There will be nothing of the sort this century, no actor will be buried in Westminster Abbey.”

This was an instance when his gift of prophecy failed, but nevertheless he possessed one, and a carefully concealed ability to sum up people and circumstances at their proper value, this power growing more pronounced as he became older.

A devoted mother with an apparently devoted son brought my comment on the rarity and beauty of such perfect companionship in their relations.

Shrewdly he looked at them whilst he pronounced, “That boy will have her eyeballs”—and sure enough he did.

Again, when he attended, at the request of Tree, one of the first meetings held to discuss the National fund for the National Theatre.

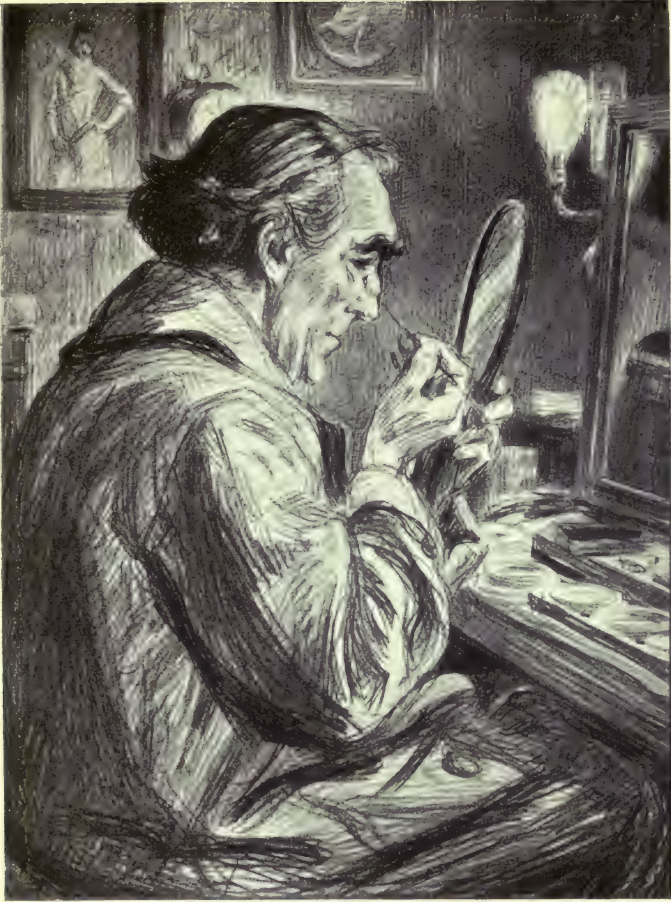
“Um, um, um, very good, I will go, do what I can, but there would be a better chance for a National Music Hall and a statue of George Edwardes in the lobby.” And this opinion must have been uttered some eighteen years ago or even more.

Irving would often say that life had taught him patience, but it was not true, he never had any, either to listen to counsel or to change any determination he made; there was no power behind his throne; he occupied it and surrounded it himself.

“Let there be *Coriolanus*, and there was *Coriolanus*,” although many argued it not to the public taste. “Let there be *Dante*, and there was *Dante*,” was a plan he refused to alter under much persuasion and a mountain of difficulties which might have made Hannibal pause. For years he had desired a play on Dante, had asked Tennyson to do one for him, but Tennyson had refused, making answer:

“It wants a Dante to write it,” which impressed Irving very much, but did not move his resolution.

He was, however, not unconscious of his failures, nor unmindful of the conduct of his associates, and he had always a keen sense of proportion, never being overwhelmed by a commendation nor for that matter by a criticism, appraising both with equal acumen. After the most thunderous applause had sounded and echoed and resounded again through the theatre and for fifteen times he had appeared before the curtain to reply by reverential bow, kiss of hand, and his modest tag, “I am your loving and your grateful servant,” he might be seen sitting in his chair calmly creaming the blue from his face, and judging, “Too much of it, too much of it.”



DRAWING, BY PAUL RENOUARD, OF SIR HENRY IRVING
IN HIS DRESSING-ROOM AT THE LYCEUM

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To that dressing-room difficult of access under the guardianship of the faithful Walter, an American lady of some thirty summers pushed her way in the company of a girl of twenty.

Irving rose to greet them with evident surprise that she should have thus dared, when she advanced as even the best Americans will, with the autobiographical note in her speech.

“My! Sir Henry, I have got such a toothache.”

Irving looked at her with amazement, and smoothing his chin with his hand, a common custom of his, he turned to the girl, cool mischief in his eyes :

“Your daughter, madam?” knowing full well that their ages precluded any such possibility and being anxious somehow to bring discomfiture to the egotistical intruder.

Irving had few idle evenings except during the earlier rehearsals of a new play or of a time-honoured revival ; but one memorable night when I had persuaded him to take me to witness *The Cat and the Cherub*, and we were sitting in the box waiting for the curtain to go up on the succeeding farce, a commissionaire came in with a note and waited as if for an answer.

“That’s all right, my boy,” and the ever-ready five shillings was given into his hand.

But Irving put the letter into his pocket unopened, and the man stood by signalling to me that the missive was important.

“Why don’t you look at it?” I asked.

“I never open letters in public.”

The commissionaire whispered, “There is bad news, mum, make him read it.”

And bad news it was indeed, sent him by one of the

many devoted who had taken some trouble to find the whereabouts of Irving so that he would get no shock when he heard the cry in the streets, "Murder of William Terriss!"

"Poor chap! Poor chap!" Irving was deeply distressed. Terriss had acted with him for years, he had always been fond of him, considered him the ideal hero of romance, declared he looked it as few others could, and "Poor chap, poor chap" was reiterated again and again whilst we pretended to eat our supper.

And the cry found echo in my heart, for I was a great admirer of Terriss, meeting him often when he was in pursuit of no other calling than his cards at poker after a midday breakfast provided by the Lumleys; and I pause to pay Gertie Lumley tribute as one of those rare women whose car is always going the way her friends want to go, whose hand is ever ready to help them into it.

Most characteristic of Irving were his actions during the days which followed the murder of William Terriss.

He was commanded to bear the widow the Royal message of condolence from Queen Victoria, and he performed this office promptly with all respect and true sympathy; but on the day of the funeral he yielded to an impulse to convey to the graveside Jessie Milward, who had been, poor girl, the comrade of William Terriss, and the leading lady in the drama proceeding, when he was assassinated. Here Irving was Christ, protector of the weak, a shelter against slander, a solace for the sorrow-stricken, a stand-by for an afflicted people.

There was not a member in the theatrical world in

the crowd which followed the murdered man to his last resting-place who did not fall in worshipful admiration of Irving when they noted the tenderness which went to his shepherding. No one but Irving could have done this, and no less typical of him was his assertion that the assassin would not be hanged.

"They will find some excuse to get him off," he would say, "mad or something. Terriss was an actor, his murderer will not be executed."

Irving played a prodigious part in social life, giving many entertainments of diplomatic significance, and one of these went to the fitting welcome for the Indian guests at the time of the Coronation. The Lyceum Theatre presented a gorgeous appearance, with scarlet the prevailing colour, and masses of flowers flanking the steps to the stage, the most conspicuous feature being an enormous Union Jack formed of hundreds of red, white and blue lights, stretching across the front of the dress circle, while crimson velvet hung at the back and huge palms entwined their pointed leaves to cover the footlights. It was a wonderful sight, and Irving, standing with a son on either side of him, and Lord Aberdeen and Richard Seddon, the Premier of New Zealand, in the rear, played the gracious host as only he could, to a procession of highnesses from all parts of the East wearing their native garb and jewelled turbans of blazing magnificence.

But what struck me more than any pomp and circumstance there, was the attention Irving contrived to pay to the nobodies, his affectionate greeting to his old friends, and his concern for their refreshment and well-being. One little man with whom he had been associated in his short commercial days was signalled

out for special courtesy, and it is rather sad to chronicle that in the after years when that little man came to die he left a proviso in his Will that none should inherit if in any way connected with the stage. Irving laughed at that, and ejaculated, "Silly fellow!" but he felt injured and insulted all the same.

Many hours of Irving's existence in town were occupied in unveiling monuments, presiding or being honourably received at important banquets, submitting to photographers for whom he had no great regard, and visiting Toole, for whom he had an unalterable affection. I, who did not meet Toole until he was a decrepit, inarticulate invalid, found it difficult to understand the love between these two. And what a miserable meeting it was, saved only from disaster by Harry's presence. Harry talked to his father whilst I, endeavouring to bring myself to some comprehension of Toole's mental condition, fell to utter grief when I showed him a little gold locket containing Irving's portrait, which had been sent to me during a trip in America. Unfortunately Irving had given Toole an exactly similar trinket, and the poor old fellow burst into tears of distress. We had great difficulty in soothing him; he regarded me so suspiciously as his rival that Harry could only overcome the awkwardness of the situation by suggesting that I looked tired and he would take me home; and we left Toole growing happy with Irving's arm around his shoulders. But Toole never wanted to see me again; although I tried to coax him with flowers and a privately taken portrait of Irving, he rejected all my advances.

It satisfied my sense of the importance of dress when I brought the topic to Irving's notice, encouraged

by the unimpeachable punctiliousness and neatness of his own attire. He never failed to wear elegantly the correct costume at the correct time, his frock-coat, his grey tweed clothes were of exactly the length to suit his long spare outlines, the neckties of sympathetic character, and on all his coats he adopted those close-fitting sleeves which attracted my notice the first time I saw him. His hats told their own story, the hard high-crowned felt was decorous even when tilted slightly over to the right eyebrow, his top-hat reflected in its brilliant surface and scarcely curved brim a whole century of dignified dandyism, and the soft drab felt of his holiday times was a rascal with a half-inch square deliberately jagged away for ventilation. It must be related that Irving did not have much respect for his own jewellery, although he was a great admirer of Guiliano, and his favourite wedding presents were of enamel achieved by this artist, or a close cluster of garnets from the same source.

Yet he would permit the small circlet of diamonds he wore on his little finger to suffer from the loss of a stone or even two, and his evening watch-chain of enamel and pearls I have known as a cripple tied together with string. Although faithfully making his jewelled offerings to brides, he never attended a wedding, too sadly conscious of the sorry ending of his own.

Of theatrical costume Irving once said to me, "You may take it as a general rule that whatever is right, looks right; and it is obvious you would not choose sky-blue and silver for a murderer, nor black for Ophelia, nor present Hamlet in green silk, nor Lady Macbeth in pink satin." He observed dress off the

stage, had strict rules of his own on its appropriateness to place and person, and he suspected all new fashions of being silly.

When Irving was at work upon a play he devoted himself to the study of any period he would illustrate, he would pore over huge books of costume and read all available histories and biographies to attain the desired atmosphere. His dress for *Dante* gave tremendous anxiety because of the difficulty of obtaining the brown and travel-stained purple he was convinced would be most appropriate, and hopefully I spent a few days in the search, even securing fabric and a doll as model to arrange the drapery and cowl. Irving expressed himself delighted with the result, and decided as surreptitiously as he could to use something totally different.

Excepting to suit his purpose, he was on the whole reluctant to investigate any new author, although Laurence successfully urged him to a study of all the most morbid Russians; he would turn with greater pleasure to his heavy old volumes, or to Dickens, or to Shakespeare, or to biographies, and he had tremendous consignments of daily newspapers, of magazines, reviews, detective stories and reports of criminal trials and modern tragedies. I cajoled him once into reading Oscar Wilde's play, *The Duchess of Padua*.

"Oscar," I suggested, "had certainly read the *Merchant of Venice*." Significantly he responded, "I expect so, and thought little of it."

I only heard one dissentient voice to the general verdict of appreciation of Irving's physical charms, and this came from a hospital nurse, promptly deported for incompatibility.

She stood opposite a portrait of him on my table, commenting, "I am told he is a hard, cruel man, and he looks it."

Perhaps she would have mitigated the decision if she had read the inscription from Othello: "Hail to thee, lady, and the grace of heaven before, behind thee and on every hand enwheel thee round." Some pleasant feeling at least went to that dedication.

CHAPTER IX

ABOUT HENRY IRVING

AFTER an illness with septic symptoms it was considered advisable that Irving should move from his eyrie in Grafton Street to a flat in Stratton Street, and the accumulations of years were dug out to the discovery of a surplus of treasures impossible to be contained comfortably in less space than was afforded by the two suites Irving had occupied so long.

Regretfully he decided to part with some of his books and a few pictures, and it was then I received thankfully a beautiful pastel-portrait by John McClure Hamilton which had aroused much admiration in various exhibitions here and in America. Now, in mellow grey perfection with tossed locks above pent eyebrows and a forehead of rarely faithful modelling, this excellent presentment of Irving looks down upon me from a wall of my favourite sitting-room.

Shifting his possessions proved a terribly arduous business, although there were three willing slaves requisitioned to the task. Irving, having ordained that crimson was to be the dominant note of his new dwelling, and this being faithfully applied to the walls of the spacious entrance, to the corridor, and to the carpet, he cared about no other details than the righteous bestowal of Whistler's and Sargent's

pictures and the proper fittings for his innumerable bookshelves.

He was an unconscious hindrance to active advance, for he would wander towards a pile of volumes in the corner, and extracting one, would ignore the prevailing chaos, pushing all intruding parcels on to the floor while he sat at the far end of the super-sized sofa and read, his long finger marking his place when he looked up sharply resentful should an unpacker venture to dump to his disturbance, or a carpenter presume to hammer a nail.

"No knocking ; I can't have that knocking."

Knocking was his bugbear, and the manager of every hotel where he visited was warned of this by the devoted custodian dresser-valet Walter. Disregarding the chance that such noise might proceed from a necessary mending of a lift, or the erection of some adjacent building which was contracted to finish at a certain time, Walter would ordain :

"No knocking, he can't bear knocking," and until Irving was out of his room in the mornings no knocking took place.

How the magic was worked it is not difficult to guess, but no knocking was the order, and in fixing up his apartments we had to wait to hang the pictures and establish the bookcases until Irving had gone down to the theatre.

When completed the flat had a lordly air, the crimson walls interrupted by a stained-glass window with a sill bearing fine bronzes amid vases of majolica, while the soft pink drawing-room was definitely French in the pattern of its brocade and its carved gilt frames, and the large dining-room, endowed with magnificent

specimens of blue and gold Chinese embroidery, contained amongst its straight close rows of pictures a fine study by Clint of the weird, wild face of Edmund Kean, always the prominent "lead" in Irving's histrionic heroes.

He stood gazing at it to deplore that the actor is bound to get less than justice from a generation who never saw him, that it is his fate to be judged by echoes which are altogether delusive when he has passed out of immediate ken, and he added reflectively, "Some fifty years hence some old fool will be saying, there never was an actor like Irving."

He strolled then deliberately to the door to call "Walter" with that deep note on the first syllable peculiar to him, and a whispered instruction brought forward a lace collar, which Kean had worn in *Hamlet*, and an old lady had sent with a letter inscribed, "Bought in London with the Hamlet dress about the year 1835."

"Wear it, you wear it," Irving said in full flattery of my respect for the traditions of the stage, yet not suspecting I should deem such conduct sacrilege.

One of our shorter expeditions during that summer had been to Stratford-on-Avon after I had been discovered sadly wanting in the experience.

It is strange to recall the vague discontent in my first impression of this shrine of a million pilgrims.

I understood and appreciated the reverent labour which had gone to its complete equipment, its meticulous arrangement of all available documents, pictures, deeds and letters, but the very perfection of their orderliness banished all glamour, my mind refused to reconstruct the period, and while I could



SKETCH OF EDMUND KEAN AS "HAMLET," BY CLINT

Reproduced by gracious permission of its owner, Mrs. Bram Stoker

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grasp the hands of the trustees realising the work they had so admirably accomplished, I could not sense the inspiration, never the time and place and the loved one altogether.

We followed the accepted rules but omitting to purchase oddments achieved from that amazing old mulberry tree, which flourishes to multiplication as prodigious as King Charles' oak, and the beds occupied for one night by Queen Elizabeth. We refused to enjoy "a back view of Miss Corelli's stables," but we visited the birth-house, which has some fragrance in its bareness, gazed at the Memorial Garden of Shakespeare's flowers plucking their significance of the immediate present, and driving duly to Ann Hathaway's Cottage, where doubt of the identity of the settle whereon the divine William had sat to woo the not quite divine Ann, seemed of small import.

Emotion was only within the church, and the approach-way was beset with the tread of many footsteps, while the air echoed harsh tones twanging facts from guide-books. How wonderful it might have been to kneel alone in the twilight before the bust in the niche near the chancel where the remains are buried beneath that epitaph of menace which has preserved them to eternal rest.

A-flutter with birds were the elms to the banks of the gently flowing Avon, but the little black steamers puffed William Shakespeare, Ltd., four-fifths of the shares allotted to the United States with Washington Irving in *the* chair.

I do not know what I wanted, but white palfreys went to it mounted by velvet-clad riders.

"Might have an Armada in the Avon with

Mr. Parker as an admiral in command," I was chaffed.

Over the teacups in the famous Red Horse Inn it was something to escape the tale of Sir Thomas Lucy and deer poaching in his park, since this was inevitable in the library where the picture of magistrate and marauder hangs.

Now I grasp as I write the secret of my dissatisfaction. It was encouraged in that library catalogue, which so honourably sets forth "artist unknown," "likeness in doubt," "attributed to," "date unfixed," "probably a portrait"; nothing before the eighteenth century seeming absolutely certain. Stratford was a mausoleum I mistrusted. Not one actuality of old came to life. The doors of the tombs remained closed, the spirit within and never without.

But the afternoon had held some instruction in the fatigue which may wait upon fame, in the penalty which has to be paid for greatness.

Irving adored Americans and indeed America, never failing in grateful acknowledgment of their deep affection for him, always regarding their troubles as his own, so that no news of disaster by earthquake, flood or war ever came from the other side without exciting his distress with a desire to enrol himself amongst the active sympathisers.

Crowds of Americans ran after him that day, twenty times or more he was stopped for an immediate grant of his autograph; books attached to pencils were thrust upon him at every corner, even at the railway station after we were entrained and waiting to start away.

One little boy, fully equipped for his job, ran panting to the carriage door.

"I say, ss-ir, ww-ill you sign here? father is coming along, but he does not run as fast as me; he ssays he wwants your autograph—because"—and here a very bad stammer impeded all utterance—"he's so often—sso often heard you pr-each."

Irving smiled amiably upon everybody, his hat was scarcely upon his head for two consecutive moments, whilst I was wondering with unjustifiable cynicism how much about Shakespeare, except as a respectable tradition or as a commercial proposition to bring grist to the town mill, did all these hectic hurrying people know or mind.

Back to me came the tale of the old labourer who had passed his life showing visitors the way to the various places of interest.

"Who was this Shakespeare?" had been answered by a prolonged scratch of the head and a dubious, "I doan't know 'zactly, but I believe he writ the boible."

"You did not care much about it," Irving said when we were all dining at Leamington that evening. "You'll like Kenilworth Castle better," he prophesied justly when the next day found us in front of that vacant old shell which it seemed easy to people with gallants and turnkeys with Amy Robsart in distress with the Earl of Leicester, and all the brave crew of them who did such dastardly hideous deeds with such elegant determined grace. Here I forgave freely the absence of desire to re-establish anything, smiling indulgently even upon the empty paper bags in gay flight round the ruins and exuding the full flavour of the week's picnics.

We paid a short visit to Warwick to note the architectural charm of the old alms-houses and the fine

detachment of the castle where the peacocks were braying with proud discordance. A little stationer's shop yielded a quaint picture of this worked in fine black silk, and achieving remarkably the effect of etching in its slender threads against a faintly discoloured sky. This was dated 1780, when the trees were in their first youth and a triple-arched bridge was in full sight with the round battlemented towers where the narrow slits and square windows were revealed clearly without shelter of green.

But for the more prolonged holiday, Irving preferred a coast, and if no time availed to get to his most dearly beloved Cornwall he would accept a compromise of the North of Devon, or of the East up Norfolk way ; and once in search of the bracing virtue we pitched our tents at Felixstowe.

The departure from Liverpool Street Station was impressive to the *n*th degree with Irving, preceded up the platform by a station-master, bareheaded, and two porters to lead the convoy, which included me, my daughter, her companion, a maid, and Walter the indispensable.

" Might be a touring company," mused Irving as he stood for a moment in survey of the trunks and the packages overlooked by his younger secretary and the baggage-man from the theatre.

Irving as a family man was an incongruity : solitude suited him, and not one of those silly tales of his sad loneliness after the death of his dog, or his deep-seated sorrow at the loss of his scenery by fire, or the desolate melancholy which followed his serious illness was ever justified by fact. He was always the courageous philosopher, a careless, trusting Bohemian shirking the

financial review. He was nevertheless shrewd enough to necessity, and astute to value men and matters ; under no circumstances was he a fool or a weakling. He lived by himself because he liked to do so, and alone he fought for himself and his calling ; he never was an object for pity or for commiseration, he had everything material he needed, and he failed only for a short time in the potential possession of the benefits he would so happily dispense at all times and seasons.

"I am not here to collect money," he would say, should I dare to urge investigation of some claim to his charity, and it may be reckoned as truth that when he recaptured his fortune no week elapsed without fifty pounds being distributed amongst the needy.

It always seemed to me that Irving did nothing whatever to secure extra-special notice or attention, and yet his personality compelled both to a somewhat overwhelming point. Wherever we wandered, even to the smallest village where the fruit-pickers or the stone-breakers would cheer him, it was the same story of recognition and acclamation, and he would modestly explain this with, "Well, there are a great many illustrated papers, and other people cut their hair."

At first I found such public acknowledgment rather embarrassing, royalty could not have been more respectfully escorted or more gladly greeted, and as I had not been in the habit of receiving bouquets with a curtsy, I shuffled rather shyly at their presentation with a little speech included.

Irving exhibited a splendid composure under the greatest provocation. He took exactly the right attitude, whether planting a tree for an hotel-keeper or accepting an old magazine at the hands of a waiter, or

a bunch of field flowers from a baby ; I have even seen him endure unmoved a couple of Italian ladies who flung themselves at his feet and kissed his hand whilst crying, " Maestro, Maestro." His equanimity was by no means upset. He never lacked dignity allied to charm and sympathy.

The air of Felixstowe being duly commended and the shipping to Harwich investigated through the willing mouths of a dozen officials, the place was found to be possessed of only one good drive, which involved a carriage being ferried across a broad river, where the flat surrounding country declared itself a close relation to Holland.

After having sampled this two or three times Felixstowe was deserted in favour of Lowestoft, and this again abandoned for Buxton, with trains and horses to readiness as might please.

Buxton was bracing enough to satisfy the sovereign mover of our driving destinies, but it yielded for him the wrong sort of recreation ; he liked to sit in contemplation of mountains or strange birds or rocks and blue and green tempestuous seas.

His day's routine would be letters till twelve, walk till luncheon prolonged to a rest, and four hours' driving before dinner-time, such drives to be amidst rough scenery for choice. The hills and the streams of Derbyshire supplied very well the need of variety, but during that year Irving was especially restless, and the set civilisation of Buxton with hydropathic complexion did not suit his mood.

During our sojourn here as elsewhere the travelling entertainers came, and although Irving never went down to hear their programme, he would always en-

courage them by " a little cheque " and a kindly letter of greeting.

One night an offence brought some blame as well as the little cheque, for a fortune-teller plying his profession in the crowded hall had predicted evil to a young girl.

" Soon a wife and soon a widow " had been prophesied, and Irving took special opportunity to reprimand gently with " All wrong, all wrong, my boy, don't do it again."

It is quite indisputable that Irving considered himself the father of his people, and his people included every artist in public amusement ; and all alike on the road would get from him some special welcome, a caravan of gipsies being hailed with tremendous joy.

It was at Buxton we went to hear Benson's Company play in *Macbeth*, and Irving acceded to a request to come behind the scenes and visit the famous actor-manager.

" What did you say to Benson ? " I asked inquisitively when he returned to the box, for the plaudits of one artist of another must necessarily be difficult to express with an absolute sincerity, unless the talented should be recognising the man of genius.

" What did Benson say ? " I demanded.

" Very good, very good, we talked about cricket and the difficulties of transporting heavy productions."

Sydney Holland, now Lord Knutsford, was in residence at the hotel ; Sir Alfred Cooper, suffering from his first attack of arthritis, arrived there for the benefit of the waters, and Lord Farquhar came in possession of a fine motor-car and endeavoured to persuade

Irving to give up his drives and take to the swifter method.

"No, no," he demurred, "never."

He liked the sound of the horses' hoofs and the chance of leisurely enjoyment of the scenery. By the uninitiated man then a motor was regarded as an obstructionist, indicted as a hog, and found guilty of obscuring the vivid green of the trees, and making the milestones seem as a vast graveyard.

There was much satisfaction to be gained from the views in the country surrounding Buxton, although stone walls are poor substitutes for green hedges in a landscape, and some argument may ensue from a sign-post which displays a female without a head to explain her title—"The Silent Woman."

Dovedale was approved amongst resting-places, but Irving could not be persuaded to mount a donkey and go down to the valley, the earnest photographer forbade. We dawdled at Castleton, where the tale of the ringing curfew bell lent charm with a ropewalk, and some pitch-dark caves centred by a pool of gloom to contrast with the brilliant sunshine of our emerging.

Haddon Hall did not escape attention, and the hanging tapestries gave to me evidence of remarkable skill in their mending, whilst no conjuror was needed to call to vision a plumed Dorothy Vernon departing through the wide door, where, by the way, Irving stood to utter with grim humour :

"Hooked," in comment on an eager mother arming her daughter's dangler round the garden.

After we left Buxton "the cavalcade," as Irving used to call it, departed for Wales ; the environment of the grey-blue hills, where long-maned ponies ran up and

down, and queer-shaped cattle gazed amidst trickling streams, suited well his grey-clad figure, his deliberate movements, the gentle grace which was ever his.

No one could so stamp with elegance the merest commonplace of taking a cigar from a case, clipping it to a bitter end, and piercing it slowly before exhaling a first puff with a bland smile of ineffable content.

Whether due to the long-tailed black-faced sheep, or to the ponies, or to the primitive beauty of Conway Castle, or the David Cox signpost at an inn in Bettws-y-coed, Wales was a complete success. But Irving cavilled at being cheered up and down Snowdon, even with the comic relief present of an enthusiastic lady whose muslin roses had under the influence of the mountain mist dissolved to splash her nose and chin with splendid purple patches.

All the people in the laden coaches insisted upon yielding Irving tribute, an incident to evoke some surprise and sport taking place at Llanrwst when, passing a crowd assembled round the Law Court, we came upon a Cheap Jack screaming of his wares in voluble Welsh.

No sooner had the clatter of our horses on the stones interrupted his harangue than he waved his hands, dashed down the steps shouting, "Gawd blimey, it's Henry Irving" with the best quality of Cockney accent that ever grew to perfection in the Whitechapel Road.

Here again I was inspired to admiration at the right reception of the greeting, for of course the carriage was stopped, the crowd gathered round it, and the hand of the descended orator was grasped with :

"How are you, my boy; so you come from

London ? ” and much enquiry took place as to the financial success of the present hawking enterprise and just a little added to speed this on the way, and all done with such simplicity and acute perception of what might be acceptable.

Irving loved the people, that was why he was able to understand them, for although he attended punctually at Royal garden parties, gratefully received Royal enquiries and mandates to Royal performances, in his heart he had little ambition to be hail-fellow-well-met with sovereigns and nobles. But he never failed to show his pleasure for the privileges he took, regarding these obstinately as being as much in acknowledgment of his profession as in personal honour.

Just before the time when King Edward's coronation was due we drove together through St. James' Street, gay with pillars encircled with laurels and flowers crowned with flaming lights. I can see him so well viewing the excellent effect with satisfied grunts whilst rising from his seat and calling to the coachman :

“ Go down to the East End, let us see what they are doing there.”

Nothing delighted him more than to be in the thick of the masses, such taste leading him even to a Bank Holiday on Yarmouth sands, and an infallible rule of attending any country fair within his reach.

That the populace loved him no less there was ample proof, none to me more touching than was evinced by an old half-blind upholsteress who had been re-covering some of his cushions and had come to me in all humility to ask if she might keep one of the old cases upon which, as she expressed it, “ his noble head had rested.”

In the later years when Lena Ashwell inaugurated the Three Arts Club and gave me the chance I gladly took to furnish the Henry Irving room there, I offered the sewing of the curtains to that same old woman whose total income then I learnt to be seven shillings a week. She begged me with tears in her eyes not to make her take payment for anything which was dedicated "to the memory of that dear Henry Irving."

CHAPTER X

ABOUT HENRY IRVING

THE morning papers announced, "Collapse of Sir Henry Irving whilst playing at Wolverhampton," and we waited anxiously all through the dreary day for further detailed news and the permission to go up and see him.

The greeting was typical from the gaunt Jaeger-clad figure sitting up with a glass of champagne in his hand.

"We are just drinking your health," and not a word to follow about his own, which was obviously of more importance. I found a curious scene at the hotel, unlike any I had ever witnessed, as if some great king were laid by and his ministers of state in watchful attendance. There were Irving in bed and a hospital nurse hovering round him but not allowed to assist him actively, for while Irving respected nurses deeply, and did not refuse to engage them if forced to do so, he made rare use of them, always manœuvring to be rid of them, and turning for all his creature comforts to the faithful ever-present Walter.

Whispering messengers moved in and out of an ante-chamber filled with flowers, while a couple of Royal messages and a foot high of telegrams fluttered on the dressing-table, and Bram Stoker, with H. J. Loveday, Irving's most assiduous lieutenants, were

endeavouring to reply to these, Irving continually editing their efforts with "Very good, but I should not say that."

I was delighted of course to learn from the waiter that three other ladies had come from different parts of England to request that they might look after Sir Henry, who had answered politely with gratitude and a hope to see them "some other time."

After much diplomacy and dodging, the doctor and I met on the evening of my appearance which he at first resented then amiably forgave, even urging me to remain longer because "I understand when you leave others will come, and he must be kept quiet."

However, all went slowly well, and Irving and I met later at Torquay, advised for its mild atmosphere, but with all its smug countenance we found every corner beset by a different quality of cold wind, and knew there were other places in the South of England possessed of a far balmier beneficence.

Devonshire and Cornwall we had visited previously at different times, beginning one trip at Lynton to finish it at Penzance and Land's End, another at Falmouth, proceeding to Padstow, and diverging to Bude and every other interesting place possible on the way, permitting horses and trains with preceding servants to evoke the indispensable comfort of our habit.

Scenery to be served with luxury was now the obeyed mandate, and the super-tripper not specially required on the programme.

But we encountered an overcrowded Ilfracombe, where walking was altogether prohibitive to Irving, for he was followed around as if he had been a circus, and

comment with close scrutiny pursued him outside all limit of pleasant leisure.

"You must let us look at him too," shouted a woman at me after she had noted my scowl when she hustled him against the window of a shop.

There were better chances of quiet down at Tintagel, where we stayed once or twice, and he enjoyed a huge sitting-room with a fine view of rugged rocks against which the multi-coloured white-frilled waves crept and dashed their black impression.

Upon his balcony the large telescope of his constant companionship was set to obtain glimpses at the passing ships, not conspicuously many, and always conspicuously distant.

However, it revealed one morning beside the green-roofed cave, dedicated to the memory of Merlin, nurse of Arthur, the tall figure of a bather waving a panama hat in joyous recognition of "The Chief." This was Margaret Halstan, with many Shakespearean heroines to her histrionic name, an ardent worshipper and a beautiful girl. What could be better? I thought as I watched her all joy and excitement when she came up the steps to know that she was under the same roof as Irving.

Grimly battlemented in careful imitation of bygone days if not actually persuasive of tradition, King Arthur's Castle Hotel answered to the suggestion, but stands so severely alone that the catering and service problems must have been difficult to solve, with Launceston as the most convenient town for providing appetising food and the essential rubber-tired landau.

But there are worse hardships than lobsters fresh

from the sea, hot from the pot, and served with Cornish cream. If vegetables lacked, the butcher did his best ; the poultry none too plump was of native birth, and the itinerant fishmonger was at least faithful in reserving a sufficiency for our eating, although after perambulating the long street with a barrow which was spread on one side with fish, and on the other with fruit, he would find his stock diminished to utter disappearance, and became so confused by his clamouring customers that he might be heard calling, " Fish all ripe, ripe fish."

Irving drove every afternoon wherever he might find himself during holiday times, and since the long distance was his desire, a pair of horses had to be procured, some humour being extracted from the supply, should these have been unaccustomed to each other's company ; while, added to their detached inclinations, might perhaps be a coachman who doubled this duty with that of postmaster, or Wesleyan preacher, or local magistrate. The ostlers at the livery stables were again in the emergency class, but everywhere was evident the wish to serve, the comic situation prevailing often, and in a very primitive part of South Cornwall, where the manager of the inn had carefully coached the servants in their address of " Sir Henry," while giving no instruction for my appellation, I became entitled as " My Grace."

Once upon a time there was a luncheon, and the presiding monarch had asked :

" What is to be your next play, Irving ? "

" *King Arthur*, sir."

" Ha ! ha ! " was the gruff guffaw ; " don't forget to put in the incident of the cakes."

Not a person at that table except J. Comyns Carr saw cause, or dared, to smile at the inept caution.

Irving was punctiliously visited by any dignitary of the Church who was in his neighbourhood, Deans being unanimous in their prompt calling upon him. Whether to upbraid him for his profession or to honour him for the way he followed it, was not quite clear, but in any event the result was the same, a subscription to some local and most deserving cause.

But at Tintagel this popular incident was omitted, although Bishop Ryle, now the Dean of Westminster, was staying at the same hotel.

On the date when the summons came to attend the postponed coronation of King Edward VII we drove Irving over to Camelford Station, and as I contemplated those two separately parading the platform beneath the light of the morning sun which twinkled at the golden cross dangling upon the capacious black silk waistcoat, I realised again, as I had at Canterbury, how fittingly might the actor have worn the gaiters, how well might the personality of the prelate suit the motley. Beacons of light, both of them, I thought that night as I was watching the fires flaming to the glory of the King upon the seven surrounding hills which overtopped the purple waters.

I am not quite sure what is the exact charm in Tintagel, but it persists, whether in the little village street where stands the old post office untouched by the renovator, but no longer allowed an official existence, or when climbing the hill to the old church near the golf links persistently invaded by munching sheep, or wandering down the narrow road where little children, all called "Awthur" or "Gwinnivear," rest

so comfortably upon upright slates that their physical construction gives cause for conjecture.

Primitive peace reigns so happily there and in the valleys beyond where, stepping warily on flat stones between high-growing ferns and multicoloured wild flowers entangled with honeysuckle, you may come upon the open sea. There are no spots I know in England like to these, and there is much to capture the imagination on journeys to reach Port Isaac voted rather dull, or the slate quarries at Delabole, where we were presented with a slate which had imprisoned a butterfly so tightly and securely that its complete shape was impressed to reflect transparently the faint colours of its frail existence.

Habitations are few and farming not too laboriously practised. A cottager or so might be persuaded to supply a lustre mug or jug, but rarely would she fill it with milk or tea.

At St. Knighton's Kieve sits the custodian of the keys, all framed in old oak as the proprieties demand, but far more anxious to obtain our copy of the *Daily Graphic* than to impart the traditional lore, legitimate to his office.

Walking into Boscastle, a fascinating, quaint spot centred with a turreted inn, and possessed of a quay, a natural rock-bound harbour, and an idle water-mill to face the situation, we followed the path up the woods to the old Minster, to be told the story of a famous young giant called Abraham because he was born to his mother when she was half a century old.

Irving stood in happy reverie on a narrow cliff which overlooked the caves inhabited by seals.

"We will go out and visit them one day," he was

saying, whilst I was thinking I should like to improve a seal or two off the face of the waters on to my back, when an incoherent female interrupted the dream, and pushing his elbow, gasped :

“ Sir, sir, may I have the honour of shaking hands with Hamlet ? ”

We did have some gorgeous days down there in Cornwall, days of never-failing delight, mornings over the rocks in happy emotion at caverns invaded, by waters now blue, now green, now violet ; evenings in watching the magnificent orange and purple sunsets, which stretched their splendour all around, making pictures black, grey, green, violet or yellow or pale blue in the depths of a sapphire sky.

It was certain that Irving never got entirely away from the theatre, for he would tread a measure swiftly from the balcony to the table, and gazing through the window, would take up pencil or pen and ink and sketch rapidly and very badly the outlines of the division of colour, emphasising some shadows in gloom of varied grey with :

“ Might do very well in *Dante*.”

Irving had ever a keen eye for hoardings which displayed theatrical posters, the more lurid the depicted scene the better to his taste. A burglar with a lighted lamp upon a prone figure, a shipwreck in a sheet of lightning, a gentleman in full evening dress knifing a lady on a scarlet background would delight him as evidence of the vitality of the theatre, and he was the more pleased the more remote was the suburb where he saw these. He knew that virtue would have its just reward in the last act, and he was convinced that playgoing was good for the people, glad to know that

some dramatic company was coming or had gone from the out-of-the-way place.

To bear the theatrical torch through the world as John Wesley carried the humble lesson of divinity was his mission, and allowing for his subject, his time and his circumstance, his welcome was scarcely less enthusiastic than that accorded to the great preacher of the eighteenth century.

Irving was always exacting in punctuality, as was John Wesley. He insisted upon service at the precise moment fixed, in the same spirit as Wesley when kept waiting for his chaise. "I have lost ten minutes for ever."

I would wonder at times whether Irving regretted his solitude, for we made a family life around him altogether, and he had not been accustomed to constant companionship except during his working times, and here again detachment was necessarily the authoritative ruling.

I would say to him half apologetically when the young people intruded into his room to devour his peaches and feed him on gossip from below stairs :

"Terrible business this for you, and I do not see how you are going to escape us now during the summers."

"No, I suppose not," he answered, and mused whilst looking across at the Atlantic :

"There is always America you know, and I am very fond of America, and you would never cross the ocean," so we smiled at each other with that comprehension which I am encouraged to think gave him as much pleasure as it gave pride to me.

During one of our visits in the South I suggested I might be introduced to the place of his birth, Keinton, which seemed to concern him less than the village where he was brought up by a stern and adorable aunt, and a bluff giant of a mining uncle, with a few cousins scarcely less satisfactory.

We met one of those cousins together down in Penzance, and she bore some resemblance to Irving in the granite greyness of her outlines. Her name was Kate, and I resented it as unseemly that she should call Irving "Johnnie," but her fault had to be condoned, for this had been her custom in his childhood.

We deposited the dear lady after a luncheon and a drive at her own house overlooking the bay, and she turned to me after kissing him good-bye, and promising to nurse him should he ever be ill, with a request that I would never leave him. I must go, she said, to the United States with him, and I must become an actress if needs be to guard him more carefully. This exhortation excited Irving's intense amusement, for he knew I had as much terror of walking a liner as I should have had of stepping upon the stage.

At any rate it was comforting to think that "Cousin Kate" hailed me so thoroughly worthy and capable with a willingness not to be gainsaid.

All roads might lead with Irving to the theatre, and whilst he was poking fun at me when I proposed that to please Cousin Kate I might study the part of Martha in *Faust*, we argued on the dubious advantage of intimate relations. Neither of us thought they should be quite ignored, and I objected, laughing, to their wholesale murder, which might tend to keep their mourners from the playhouse.

“The Court must wear full mourning *for a week*,” he quoted from *Louis the Eleventh*; but more seriously he remonstrated, “Those in grief should go to the theatre. That is what a theatre is for, to distract you and take you out of yourself.”

Somehow that doctrine has made good for me since, and in every trouble time, and I have had many, I take solace at the theatre. Some evenings I ponder there on the prevalence of humbug, the hollow mockery of condolence, the soothing speech of those inquisitive aliens who are always so certain the departed is well and comfortably bestowed. Outside acquaintances are full of hackneyed phrases signifying nothing except their desire to get on with their duty to you, to acquit themselves creditably by so many inches of superficial sympathy measured out to the case of the financially endowed or bereft. Friends understand and sit in silence, or keep away.

There was once a gay sinner with an acquisitive hand and a gushing manner calling to condole with a loving niece-heiress upon the death of her wealthy aunt.

“Sybil, I *am* so sorry, dear; and you were such an angel to her, but she is better off where she is I am sure.” Then proceeded a tale of the speaker’s financial embarrassment and the request for an immediate loan of ten pounds, which being tendered was eagerly folded and pocketed with the amazing farewell:

“Good-bye, darling, how truly sweet you have been, and I am so distressed for you, and I do hope your dear aunt will soon be better.”

St. Ives was amongst my objectives, because being for the moment denied Keinton, I insisted upon an introduction to Helston, the scene of Irving’s early

upbringing, and we drove over there to trace the house where he had lived, ultimately finding it all unhallowed and unmarked with no more distinction to it than the fine groceries it contained and the royal insignia to announce its privileges to perform the duties of a post office.

Happily the attendant clerk had not been trained in the Metropolis, and although she exhibited almost as much ignorance as if she had enjoyed that advantage, this was entirely detached from insolence.

It remains yet for perennial meditation the postal clerk's attitude towards a customer or an enquirer. Any intruder within her glass doors, or over her wooden counter, acts as an irritant, as violent as the red rag to a bull or any critic to any artist.

However, our little friend at the grocer's was innocent of discourteous sin, but gurgled hysterically when she recognised her guest, all unknowing that he had ever dwelt within the walls of her occupation.

Irving strode along to investigation, ruminating over the disused tin mines which dotted the hillside, and stopping to inspect a shabby tin tabernacle where at the age of eight he had collected a small audience to hear him consign to eternal flames an ancient grandmother who had threatened him with awful penalty for some Sabbatarian breach.

Back to Tintagel we went gleefully, but not too swiftly, stopping somehow or other at Bude and the little quiet station where the scuttling of the rabbits would announce an approaching train. We had luncheon at "The Falcon," to wander down by the little waterway which leads to the open, and here

Irving was greeted by some peripatetic relative of Matthew Arnold's with fishing-rod in hand to suggest her optimistic outlook.

All were definitely glad to receive us back at King Arthur's Castle Hotel. "No spot like it," Irving was again convinced as he stood upon his balcony the next morning watching the clustering and the flight of the seagulls, listening to the squeaks of the peewits, whose fretful calls persisted with one dominant "peevee" he christened "Gwinnie," after a baby in the hotel, who was for ever whining to an over-fond mother.

Every evening I looked in vain for the predatory hawk in a moment of absolute immobility to swoop with disaster upon some unconscious farmyard offender. He kept no appointment I made with him, and I was for ever wanting to meet the lark, and he failed no less, but I did enjoy the experience of trying to coax a nonchalant magpie while regretting my ignorance of its lucky or unlucky significance, when all black, or black and white, if approached from the rear or the front.

Even the happiest holidays come inevitably to their conclusion, but I know it was Irving's intention, after he had completed the two years' farewell tour, to go back again to Tintagel, engage those rooms where he had spent so many contented weeks, and write his memoirs which an enterprising American had failed to encourage earlier, even with an offer of a preliminary fee of five thousand pounds.

But that was not to be, and the last holiday we ever spent together began at Whitby, passing at York Station an old and very ill Lord Glenesk, standing bareheaded under the impression that he, according to his wont,

was receiving Queen Victoria on her way up to Balmoral.

We ended our journey at Scarborough, taking Peterborough Cathedral on the homeward way, and finding there the father of Stephen Phillips, who was the Precentor, a fine old fellow, most anxious to hear Irving's opinion of his poet son, whose great ability was shadowed by great weakness.

Oh ! Yorkshire was excruciatingly cold that year, not even the broadest sweeps of purple heather could console for the devastating winds which swept across the dreary spaciousness, and I would get back from our excursions grey and blue and green of face, with fingers so frozen that boiling water scarcely warmed to their touch.

“ Cold in the earth and sixteen wild Decembers
From these brown moors have melted into Spring,
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of pain and suffering.”

“ You like your country *frappé*,” I would object, and Irving expressed his conviction that cold was good for him.

There was a young doctor staying in the hotel who approached me with a warning :

“ Sir Henry looks very ill, he ought to take more rest, go to Egypt next winter and not think of acting again. He won't live very long if he does not rest.”

That afternoon, after we had been to hear some clever performance of the elder George Grossmith's, and he had gone round to congratulate him upon his big audience, I demanded of Irving :

“Supposing you were told that you would live ten years if you would rest and only two if you continue to act, what would you do?”

Not a moment's hesitation went to the answer, “I should act.”

Just before Irving started work at Sheffield he, Harry and I had visited Drury Lane Theatre to see Alexander in *The Prodigal Son*. When we emerged, and I was sitting in the carriage, I watched those two so alike beneath the pale light over the door of the Royal entrance, Harry on the higher step with his chin almost against his father's shoulder, the two spare gaunt figures, the two ultra-tall hats at the same angle, the identical elegance in their attitude whilst they puffed at their cigars. “I follow after” seemed clearly emblazoned upon Harry; alas! a short dream so soon dispelled.

A couple of weeks later Irving's life closed with awful suddenness at Bradford. “Into thy hands,” he had spoken his last words upon the stage with Tennyson's in *Becket*.

Many have conjectured on Irving's feeling about sudden death. I knew him very shocked at that fate which befell his friend L. F. Austin. He realised, too, the overwhelming blow for those who loved and were left, and he repented his cynical putting forth of “A few thousand pounds might compensate?” as soon as he understood the true pain of my negation.

I can quote his own words in testimony to his tenets.

“I believe in immortality, and my faith is strengthened with advancing years; without faith in

things spiritual this life would indeed be a weary waste."

No ! Irving would not have chosen to die suddenly, and at work. Leisure with love to it from his sons and his friends, he had intended to enjoy after his farewell tour, which was planned to reach to America.

"A kindly continent to me, but I will not leave my bones there if I can help it," he had written when understanding himself too weak to complete the project to go again.

About six months afterwards Joseph Hatton came to see me, and I only make allusion to the flattering lines he wrote upon that visit, because I would correct a constantly repeated error about the making of the pall of laurel leaves upon which, to the strains of the funeral march from *Coriolanus*, the sun put its golden stamp in Westminster Abbey.

I designed that pall, Harry obtaining for me a special permission that it might be used instead of the velvet one chosen for Lord Tennyson, but I did not make it personally. It was the work of accomplished florists, thousands of leaves went to its contrivance, mounted closely to cover the green foundation, and it could never have been achieved to perfection by any amateur in a few days and nights. I believe indeed some dozen workers went to its completion, but without a doubt the effect was impressively, grandly symbolic. Yet not a few famous have granted the idea the flattery of an imitation of its *outward* seeming.

How have I dared to write about Irving at all ? I cannot imagine, but since the life of the people is the mainspring of every history I shall offer no excuse for dwelling strenuously upon the personality of one of



DEATH MASK OF SIR HENRY IRVING

BY SIR GEORGE FRAMPTON, R.A.

Presented to the London Museum by Mrs. Bram Stoker.

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the greatest of these. I disclose him of human enchantment, taking some encouragement from his own criticism upon the life of Gladstone :

“ Three volumes, a stupendous book, about a stupendous man, politician and ecclesiastic. As a biography, uninteresting, because there are no trivialities which make up existence and banish pomposity.”

CHAPTER XI

ABOUT THE SONS OF HENRY IRVING

I FIND it very difficult to write about Harry Irving, the sad circumstance of his death is so recent, and the glad circumstance of his living is sacrosanct to me, since in all that concerned us together, and there was much, he gave me a dear and tender consideration quite unmeet for the printed word.

Upon his work for the stage it is easy to dwell, and the less discerning acclaim primarily his *Admirable Crichton* a creation of fantasy and fun served with sentiment and an irresistible suavity.

But with his *Hamlet*, which by reason of its insistent vitality and clear with rapid utterance I reckon to be the most fascinating I have heard, I was closely connected, for the rehearsals and production took place during a convalescence of his father's when we were together at Torquay. His son's venture was so constantly in the mind of Irving that he would give me whole speeches with the emphasis and action he himself had played into the part. None of De Bureau went to his attitude towards his offspring ; and on the inaugural night the authorities kept the telegraph office open to apprise a very proud father of the rapturous reception accorded to a very gifted son.

I never saw the *Hamlet* of Irving the father, but I

often watched the *Hamlet* of Irving the son, and once from a box in the company of Irving, whose whispered commentary on every movement and every word was not the least elucidating and absorbing part of the performance. It was rather an ordeal for Harry, but he came bravely through, although as luck would have it that night he was threatened with a serious throat trouble, and an anxious wife was offering him beef tea in the wings, while a professor of breathing exercises stood hopefully outside his dressing-room door.

Harry presented *Hamlet* at various phases in his career as manager in London and in the country, indeed for more than twenty years. He, so to speak, rolled himself up in that inky cloak, and seemed at times to be veritably Hamlet, in all moods, now harsh, now tender, now grave, now gay, but not truly disinclined to the company of women, who by the way showed the greater disposition towards him the less he encouraged them.

Harry was no anchorite, but never a light talker, yet he would accept more gratefully a dinner with a pretty neighbour than with a plain one; and since he was invariably charming, he owned many beautiful and distinguished adorers, "the young of all ages" I used to call them, and they came in their numbers to the theatre eager to snatch a chance to return to sup with him and his wife, most admirable of cooks, with a might-have-been-dangerous tendency to believe,

"All's right in the world so long as Harry is amused and contented."

Harry was student, scholar, reader, recluse, observer and introspector, but never the philanderer, notwithstanding that fortune had so well provided him. Books and books and books again absorbed most of his affec-

tions, and his library grew to prodigious proportions, excluding no worthy modern or classic author.

But while he inclined towards crime in others, and gloried in concentrated study of the best and worst murders in two cities, the investigation of their state of mind being his first ambition, he was the sweetest prince that ever stepped in the dominion of domesticity.

To hear him talk of his daughter Elizabeth was the whole alphabet of paternal love and joy.

What those two grew to be to each other made especially cruel the tragedy of his passing on whilst she was scarcely on the threshold of her exquisite young girlhood, which he would have watched and cherished and guided with such pride.

He was a fortunate fellow, for he married the woman he loved, and he loved the woman he married, and their children beautifully completed the union, Laurence, the firstborn, flying to fame and the *Croix de Guerre*, and Elizabeth being just Elizabeth and a world of happiness to him in the mere pronounciation of her name.

Harry was ultra-sensitive, or perhaps only over-indulged. The theatre was his inheritance, and he must guard its interests zealously. Here was his conviction, and he was well fitted to his task, being of dignified demeanour, of ready speech, and of an absolute sincerity. As a leader, or the ideal President of a Royal Academy of Acting? as a delegate, he was the man; and his brother actors never grudged him prominent place. They were glad of him as representative, spirit and person going well to the part of spokesman, while, with his own company, he would never hesitate to preach the gospel of good, would take trouble to hold

this one from drink and that one from gambling, understanding the weaknesses of others, and never exhibiting the tiresome attributes of the prig, and always possessed of the courage to voice his convictions.

Very characteristic was Harry's attitude when an air raid was dropping bombs on the Strand, and a famous author shielding himself from shrapnel under an umbrella, while terrified crowds were rushing into the vestibule of the Savoy Theatre during his rehearsal of a new play. He listened to the tales of disaster without, sent word that he would gladly be invaded by any who were frightened, and returned to his labours on the stage, complete calm in his demeanour while he commanded :

“Get on with the photographs.”

Later, during the war, when the world of play-acting was too trivial for his best devotions, he left the theatre and gave his time to the Admiralty, being placed, strange to say, in the most obviously suitable position, the Secret Investigation Department, where he remained as long as he was physically able. And during that time I saw him most frequently, for he was living at Harrow, and would wait with me for the special train he favoured.

No affectation whatever went to Harry Irving, and he was not exactly a saint, rather the complete child in simple revelation of his feelings, of his entertainment, of his boredom.

He demanded congenial company, or he would have none, alike up at Oxford, at his clubs, and in his home. Should it fail him entirely, he was absent or dumb. I have known him enter a room, look around, notice a stranger, deliberately throw a brick of his disapproval

of him by an overpowering silence. Moody and dull he was with those he did not care about, and you could read in his preoccupied mien "a waste of time."

Should he speak at all then, he would be quick to controversy, glad to make argument with an ungenial, and rarely persuadable to the casual course of conversation. But if treated temperately, and not rushed to the more patently polite conclusion, he would occasionally repent, and on a certain afternoon he came in like a lion to growl at a lamb of God he had not expected to find, and therefore instinctively resented, until he was wooed to interest by a well-expressed view of the piety and true religion which might be observed in criminals.

Harry was on to this at once, drawing his chair up round the fire, restraining all further furtive glances at the door, whence he had intended to make immediate escape, and entering with enthusiasm into a discussion of the psychology of the thief, with one foot in a fire-proof safe and the other in a fire-proof hell.

The curtain on that converse did not descend until 2 a.m., but the epilogue of friendship remained unspoken, Harry having squeezed the informer dry, left him to work out his own salvation with that of others.

But devoted as Harry was to the study of crime, impressed as he might be with his duty as a citizen, distressed at the disaster and cruelty engendered by patriotism, yet the heart of him was in the tradition of the theatre, a strange truth since the theatre is after all but make-believe, yet he had the hereditary faith in its fine influence, its possibilities to uplift and to teach, whilst undoubtedly he took considerable pleasure in acting.

Physically also Harry resembled his father in much, although their chins and their brows were as markedly different as the tales of their lives, for whereas Irving fought every inch of the battle alone upon the hardest roads, Harry walked ever upon velvet, thick laid with an anxious devotion.

I am so proud of a letter he once sent to me.

"You do write the most cheering, delightful and encouraging letters. It does one's heart good to get such a message. Your faith and trust mean a great deal to me. There is no one who seems to understand me and sympathise with me as you do, and it is a happy and cheering thought that it is perhaps because you loved and felt with father, and know how he would have regarded things. Times theatrically are very difficult just now, and the whole rather chaotic. Competition is terribly severe. We have to fight against opposition unknown thirty years ago. It is going to be a struggle to hold our own in present conditions. Where will you be next week? I want so much to see you and have a talk. You are a dear, and I so enjoyed that long, I hope not too long, afternoon we had together. Yours ever, H. B. I."

As all the world knows, H. B. Irving was a fine speaker on many topics, and had for years delivered lectures at the Royal Institute and in all parts of the country, yet it was surprising that he should receive a request to preach at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

He accepted the idea with his usual diffidence and the query of "a free hand?"

He made his subject, "The amusement of the

people," setting forth his points with such apt skill that the ecclesiastical authorities were not entirely gratified by his tale.

No prelate, however enlightened, could perhaps be expected to be quite pleased by :

" When one thinks of all the harm that has been done in this world in the name of religion by kings and princes and statesmen, really of all human employment, the theatre seems to be the most innocent, the least susceptible of mischief and perversion."

" At any rate our present attitude towards Sunday amusement is both illogical and hypocritical ; cinematograph theatres are allowed to be open on Sunday on a condition that they give some comparatively small portion of their proceeds to charity. But if on Sunday in a cause purely for charity someone wants to play a play of Shakespeare's, or even a little duologue of a most harmless and innocent character, it is forbidden. Here we have humbug in its highest and best manifestation. What are you as a Church going to say to insincerity of this kind ? Are you going to say that all Sunday entertainment is sinful, or to accept an evasion of the principle, which deliberately excludes all that is highest and most elevating in dramatic art ? . . .

You of the Church can do something in recognising first of all that the amusement of the people is as natural and wholesome a necessity as their health or spiritual welfare. Never has the public been catered for so prodigally as to-day, and that prodigality will certainly not get less as time goes on. You cannot hope to stem the tide, take it at the flood and try your



THE MODEL OF THE SILVER AND JEWELLED CASKET
USED IN THE "MERCHANT OF VENICE"

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utmost to guide at least a part of it into worthy channels, so you will be serving, I believe, not only the cause of art but indirectly the cause of religion. The art of the theatre is a great art, and the gifts of the play-writer and actor are as much God's gifts as the gifts of poet, painter and musician."

There was a great deal more to it, all excellent, but the Bishop of London is not yet a professing playgoer, albeit lesser lights of the Church have been known to crowd to special performances with orders—holy orders!

It was with Harry I first made entry into the studio of Thomas Brock, sculptor, to whom was entrusted the statue to Irving, for which all the members of the profession had united in purse and power to secure pride of place near the National Portrait Gallery.

What a fine fellow I found Brock, the embodiment of simplicity, keen in his desire for our opinion on the likeness, for he had only met Irving once in his life, and the task was not easy with so many to criticise and give counsel on the attitude and the gesture. Everyone seems to have had something to say about the costume too, for all had agreed he should not be presented as an actor, but as a man, while it was impossible to hope for a righteously artistic result in a frock-coat. However, the happiest mean was arrived at, and often afterwards I sat with Brock in the studio whilst he was at work on Queen Victoria's memorial.

"British I desire it to be, definitely British," and no one can stand opposite that white gold-crowned pile with its typical groups and bronze interruptions and note the splendid sturdiness with the beauty of its art without understanding that Sir Thomas Brock, K.C.B.,

realised his own conception of his duty, and did it most splendidly well.

With this and Gladstone's figure in the Strand, and Irving's in Charing Cross Road, Brock will live through many centuries. He is at work yet in the studio where he first came a youth to study under Foley, the sculptor, and where recently I took Harry's son Laurence, who is well on the way to a career as artist on canvas and stone.

They are odd coincidences that the last appearance which Sir Henry Irving made upon the stage should have been at His Majesty's Theatre when he played *Waterloo* for the benefit of Lionel Brough, and that the last appearance of H. B. Irving on the stage was also at His Majesty's Theatre, and for the benefit of the Royal Pension Fund. Odd again too that my last letter from Irving was concerned with the Shylock of Bouchier, and that the last time I saw H. B. Irving we talked of the Shylock of Muscovitch.

"Not like father's, eh?" he had said, and I assured him not.

He died two days afterwards, and upon his grave-stone, which is set in a rock garden overflowing with blossom, are inscribed some verses, which he had ever loved, written by Clough:

"Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not nor faileth,
And as things have been, they remain.

And not by Eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright."

I knew Laurence Irving long before I knew Harry, but never so well. He had few intimates before his marriage, and afterwards none so congenial as his wife, Mabel Hackney, who was for some time in the company with him and his father.

I remember so well a letter from America which came to announce a suspicion of this growing attachment. Irving had a most keen eye for romantic intrigues, nothing ever escaped him, and he saw more when he wasn't looking than Argus might have glimpsed beneath the light of the harvest moon.

"Miss Hackney," it appeared, "was trudging round New York carrying books for Laurence." That settled it, I suspect, her docile acceptance of the burden of books, for Laurence, like Harry, was devoted to reading.

But although he and I never grew to the completest sympathy until after the death of his father, we had many cheery hours together, when he would prove a most delightful companion, and of that superlative ability which went to the making of several plays; of *Peter the Great*, of *Lovelace*, and of his dramatic adaptation of Dostoieffsky's *Crime and Punishment*, of his translation of *Les Hanneçons* into *The Incubus*, and to his splendid acting in *The Typhoon* and in Ibsen's *Pretenders*.

When talking to Laurence I found it hard to persuade him of the admiration he had widely won, or of the deep love of his father, whom he adored.

It is not easy to convince one silent undemonstrative man of the affection of another of like habit.

When sometimes I said to Irving, "Laurence does not believe you truly love him," he would look very serious, and then with sly fun :

“ Does he want me to kiss him ? ”

Laurence could not help his own disposition, and his more wary ways, perhaps nurtured in his earliest years, and further encouraged during the time spent in Russia in preparation for Diplomacy, an idea he subsequently abandoned. He was suspicious of most people, indeed he was never quite sure of my honourable intentions, but he grew resigned gradually to my constant presence, and he would seek me often in council, and would say with half-jesting envy, when noting what affectionate terms Harry and I had achieved :

“ I am the *second* son of old Sir Rowland,” in quotation from *As You Like It* ; for even while he deeply admired his brother, he would, almost against his inclination, wonder whether Harry’s superior fortune had been merited.

He was rather restless and dissatisfied, argumentative, rebellious, “ always agin the Government,” his father would say of him with such tender pride going to the pronouncement. Like Harry, Laurence was lucky in his marriage, except that it lacked the children he always desired, and although he would vary his own policy, should this be right ? would that be good ? shall I succeed ? shall I make money ? he was ever certain of the course his father should pursue. “ My father ought ” to do so and so, or so and so, he would dogmatise ; and amongst the many things that Laurence thought his father should not do was to occupy the centre of the stage as Shylock whilst he was playing Antonio. Amongst the things he thought his father should do was, however, to produce *Captain Brass-bound’s Conversion* ; his arguments in favour of this were voluble, and extensive on one wearisome after-

noon when he enforced his plea by reading the play aloud to me from beginning to end, not exactly encouraging me to back up his advice, but had I done so I am aware the result would have been exactly the same. Irving was never persuaded to produce any play he did not wish to produce, nor for that matter to do anything he didn't think it well to do.

Laurence acted much with his father, Harry never, although both daughters-in-law were in his company for a considerable time, Mabel Hackney being the best conceivable dauphin in *Louis the Eleventh*, whilst Dorothea presented Julie in *The Lyons Mail* with a magnificently vigorous shriek, and both endowed Annette in *The Bells* with the essential vivacity. No one was ever as good in *Waterloo* as Mabel, and I have seen at least half a dozen assume the gentle charm of the girl from the country who came to tend her uncle "all the way by train."

Mabel Hackney might in truth be termed the ideal mate for Laurence. "Launy," as she used to call him when they sat with me together with the beloved grey-haired Irish terrier to play "the dog between." She shared all his ambitions and his labours, read with him, worked with him, talked with him, no matter how tired she might be. She managed all his tours, learnt typewriting for his benefit, and, so far as she could, took every business worry from his shoulders, attending on him with no less assiduity at home than at the theatre.

He could do nothing without her, and I recall once when Irving and I and my daughter were at Minehead we drove over to fetch them from some cottage they occupied near The Quantocks, and Laurence's attempt

to pack his own clothes resulted in his appearing that night at dinner *minus* a necktie or a waistcoat, in a black evening jacket and blue serge trousers. Laurence had the abstracted way, but he cared so desperately for what he might be planning at the time that all else in the world was obscured to him.

Slackness could never be attributed to him when at work or preaching scarlet Socialism, and his health was luckily of the first robust order. He was a fine fellow physically and mentally, and when news came to me that he and his wife were drowned in the St. Lawrence River I could only reiterate again and again, "I am glad Irving is dead, he could not have borne this."

My box of treasured letters holds one Laurence wrote to me after he had knelt by the bedside of his father on the day of the calamity at Bradford. A few lines of it run :

"But there was much love in his nature, and those who would say he only worshipped and loved his success wronged him.

Nothing must ever break the tie that exists between us, the affection we both had for my dear father ; I shall always be grateful to you for all you did to relieve and brighten the solitude of his last years. I wished yesterday you could have seen him as he lay there as calmly as if he were asleep.

I don't write to you about the loss to dramatic art and the nation, that is for others. I write to you as to one who was very fond of him, and of course this is from us both, Mabel as well as me.

Affectionately yours,

LAURENCE IRVING."



SIR HENRY IRVING, WITH HIS SON LAURENCE AND
FUSSIE ON THE LINKS AT CROMER

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Later, after we had read many printed pages of sheer eulogy, Laurence, characteristically discontented, would say, "I wish they would not make such a white-winged angel of father. He was never that."

However, we agreed upon accepting Max Beer-bohm's summary, "A great romantic figure, and his death is like the loss of a legend."

CHAPTER XII

ABOUT JAMES K. HACKETT, MRS. J. E. PANTON,
W. L. GEORGE AND JAMES B. FAGAN

THE death of Henry Irving brought to conclusion the best epoch of my life, which has been definitely divided into four parts, the careless, the commercial, the devotional and the idly conventional.

What good for others I have done in any of these is deplorably little.

“Unto him who works and feels he works the same grand year is ever at the door,” but there is no such hope for her who plays and knows she plays, deliberately setting aside any serious labour and any serious thought on any serious circumstances. I might dwell sadly upon my missed chances, but dwelling sadly upon anything is not amongst my habits, to live and laugh in the sunlight being my lower ambition, whilst I ponder as little as maybe, and talk as long as I can, knowing my politics are mainly platonic and my faith vaguely and beautifully accompanied by angels draped in rainbows.

Mrs. J. E. Panton used to tell me to greet gladly old age because it is so restful.

Mrs. Panton is a very wise creature with a delicate air of a Cosway miniature and slim white fingers encircled with many coloured jewels. She sits at ease now

gowned in black silk, diatribing against the ways of to-day, airing her old grievance against her father, Derby Day Frith, R.A., whose double matrimonial life remains eternally amongst her disgruntles. She boasts a moral outlook of the violent Victorian type, and although only about a dozen years older than I am, she persists with a flattering smile to talk to me as if I were in my first youth. We agree that everyone is most capable of legislating for others, and know that the world would be rather dull should we have no chance to cavil at the *coiffure* or conduct of Mrs. A., or at Mr. B.'s treatment of his wife, or at Mrs. C.'s management of her business, or at Mr. D.'s achievement of his pleasure, which are all alike impossible of universal approval.

What then can I bring to judgment of myself by myself? Those few nightshirts for the soldiers which I endowed with embroidery to limit the output, and some pneumonia jackets stabbed in silk to the high-class commendation of Lady Bland-Sutton.

Incidentally I always regret the energy which goes to bazaars in the acquirement of goods and their disposal, knowing that the direct presentation of the expenditure might total to more profit, while far less fatigue and far more entertainment are involved in a public dance.

But yet I have a pleasant memory of one bazaar, which was of course conducted, as all good bazaars are, upon the lines of Mark Twain's city where the Chinamen lived by taking in each other's washing.

However, I sold to Queen Alexandra a little jacket made by my mother, who with all the enthusiasm of

her age was enchanted to hear of the royal destiny which befell her handiwork.

But that properly loyal spirit was not so blatant a few weeks after King Edward's coronation, when during a journey in a third-class carriage I was much entertained by a pair of old crones watching a down-pour splashing the windows while they dialogued :

" Raining hard, ain't it ? 'E don't 'ave the weather 'is mother 'ad, do 'e ? "

" No, p'raps 'e don't deserve it neither."

But I want to confess to my cowardice during air raids when I was dangerously threatened by the glass skylight to my flat in Fitzroy Square, where the old cellars were most inviting, and I sat one night with my cook, whose prayers for forgiveness were so loud and so heartrending I had to reproach her into smiles with :

" I had no idea you were such a bad cook and such a careless calculator."

Another evening of terror was spent there behind curtains in a darkened room, while Harold Begbie preached faith and hope to me in full view of a lighted airship hovering over the dim square.

I contrast myself most unworthily with Irene Scharrer who rented that flat for the birth of her baby and was visited by an air raid some three days after the event, when she calmly allowed herself to be carried to the cellar, showing, I was told, through the day and night a serene demeanour and a complete absence of fear. All honour to her.

No, I cannot excuse my futility even to myself, and I am sure should I venture to try and enter heaven on any pretension I should deserve the same answer as he

who pleaded on the strength of a couple of coppers once given to a beggar :

“ Take your damned twopence and go below.”

Meanwhile I remain here yet cultivating my gregarious germ, but daring to confess now I grow tired of making excursions with it at all times.

I have become the reluctant diner out, more content to take my later meals alone, the theatre or reception to follow being yet among acceptable and accepted pleasures. The old Duke of Northumberland used to say, pointing to a small table at the furthest end of his lofty library in the ancient Northern Castle, “ That’s what it all comes to, a cutlet and a glass of port.” But I have not arrived there yet, and it must not be thought that my evening meal by my own fire-side is of the salt-haddock-upon-the-knee type, popularly supposed to be the favourite food of the lonely female, while she reads the last edition and is well convinced of the unrighteousness of the prevailing ways. But I am greatly conscious that there is something to be said in favour of real old age, but complete restfulness is not upon the lower shelf which I occupy, and I reply gladly to the call of any invitation which seems to point joyously. A party holds perennial charm for me, so that it shall be a party composed of the best sympathetic material.

W. L. George is amongst my friends who have a perfect passion for parties. He is always arranging these and peremptory in their announcement through a very early in the morning telephone, “ Come here, come there, come anywhere, but come.”

Of many such commands I recall one which ran :

“ You must come to dinner to-night to meet the American actor James K. Hackett. He knew Irving and wants to know you. Don’t argue, and don’t be selfish, 8 o’clock sharp.”

There it was, and so it came to pass that I met J. K. Hackett, and we grew to intimacy almost at first sight, when we talked yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, and I learnt the amazing fact that he was born when his father was seventy years old.

Hackett is a fine figure of a man, and if I were a little younger, or a little older, I might have dared to admire his grace and his power. As it was I just listened to him respectfully while he told me his views of *Macbeth* which were then crystallising to a London production, and then he related an experience which even to the least psychic would have offered food for deep reflection. James K. Hackett had, like Pharaoh, dreamt a dream ; but no symbolism went to its significance, no prophecy of prosperity or of poverty. It was a plain unadulterated dream of disaster, and the terrific tragedy of it was related immediately, so that no hallucination or exaggeration went to the detail simply and promptly transmitted. None the less it is as difficult to believe in the occurrence as to comprehend the mystery of its inspiration.

Hackett, possessed always of an immense reverence for Irving, whom he had known well in America, was also intimate with Harry, and had asked him in town to act Iago to his *Othello*.

Harry, while regretting that his other engagements did not permit this, proposed :

“ Laurence might be able to come. He is an excellent Iago, and played the character with Tree.”

"I don't know Laurence ; what does he look like ? I should be very pleased to have him with me, but I am pledged to go to Paris to-day. Do you think he would come there and talk the matter over ? "

Harry promised to try and arrange it so.

The following night Hackett, awaking suddenly from his sleep, told of a terrible nightmare with a ship in distress, of a drowned man on the beach, and of many awful moments which had gone in a vain attempt to revive him.

"Strange, strange," he repeated to his wife, Beatrice Beckley, "it is all so vivid, so clear, and we tried hard to bring him round."

In the morning the *New York Herald* published a portrait of Laurence Irving with the news that he had been drowned.

"That is the face of the man of my dream," cried Hackett as he looked at the pictured page ; "that is his face, and he was so pale, and the water ran from his hair. I shall never forget it."

Why this prevision should have been granted time will never reveal, for undoubtedly the American actor knew little of the English actor, while it was certain that he had never seen him, and the casual observer would not be prone to grant unto James K. Hackett any specially spiritual attribute.

Despite the fine exercise of his imagination in his *Macbeth*, and I have seen none better, he is yet prominently upon the material side.

"J. K.," as his friends love to call him, has achieved much over here, and the fact of his being invited by the French Government to appear at the *Odéon* as *Macbeth* and *Othello*, with the unique result of the

presentation of the *Légion d'Honneur*, made international history, bordering upon the political line.

During that eventful week in Paris the authoritative hustling methods of the man from New York gave occasion to some fun with rapid work for those watching devotedly his interests over here.

The telephone bell rang.

"You are wanted by Paris, madam." Our very modern J. K. employed my daughter as his business representative, therefore it would not be right for me to mention that his geniality, his generosity and the magnetic charm of him combine to make him deeply beloved by all who serve him.

"Wanted on the telephone from Paris" was a prelude to a rush of desire to secure anything, everything, that might be needed.

"Gémier decided not to act; please send over at once an Iago, letter perfect."

As the performance was to take place two days after this mandate, it was not quite easy to obey it. However, needs must when affection drives, and H. A. Saintsbury was found willing to answer to the call, possessing a passport as luck would have it, and being fully equipped with many years of experience.

But this was not the end of that perfect day's demand.

Seven p.m. "You are wanted on the telephone from Paris, madam," gave a little cause for anxiety, and a prayer that there was no demand for a Desdemona, since Mrs. Hackett was the ideal already there.

"Decided to have understudy for Malcolm. Can you forward by aeroplane the man I had in London?"

Some commands these, one Iago by train and one Malcolm by aeroplane. Whiteley, the Universal Provider, might have been put to it in proving his title, but the appointed was worthy of her hire, the wishes of Hackett were not gainsaid, what he wanted he had, and there was an end to it.

J. K. was known as a *matinée* idol of the deepest dye, when he walked to his triumph in the States in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, but he always denied this accusation, yet it is obvious that he could execute the *pas de fascination*, and to be sure the majority of women would deny now the existence of such a character as a *matinée* idol. She is quite certain she is no more attracted by actors than by others.

I am possessed with an idea that I understand women, while I am quite aware she would contradict this. At any rate I am tolerant of her, and I am as convinced as I dare be that she rapidly approaches the reactionary stage, growing inclined towards matrimony and maternity.

She can talk as much as she likes, and she does about her desire for freedom and her content in an Adamless Eden, but seldom is either assertion actually true. The normal girl is exactly like she always was in the heart of her, and given a sufficiency of income to meet her needs which necessarily vary, she just wants a husband and a baby.

Having secured them, it is possible that she may only enjoy them for a few years, and then be off for adventure in some more exciting arena than she can find round the domestic hearth.

But as someone else observed, marriage is the proper conclusion of every woman's education, even though

it doesn't complete it to finality; for this she must plough her way through the world of experience, pleasure and pain.

It is as open to dispute whether the woman of achievement in public service is as happy as she of the narrower intellect who waits contentedly to welcome the evening return of her husband, as it is incontrovertible that public life to-day destitute of the services of woman would be very difficult to carry on.

Ah! there is the rub. It is impossible to visualise political and industrial affairs independent of the help of woman.

No Government Department would fairly deny this, indeed all use her in the highest branches, and there is not a municipal administration able to carry on comfortably without her, while we must recognise that some of the best hospitals are managed and staffed by her, and that the multitude of her industries in the charitable way adds up to incalculable sum.

Therefore should she be allowed, as indeed she is, a greater measure of tolerance than formerly, so would she be well persuaded not to outstep the constable—by the way what an admirable policeman she does make—and be sufficiently considerate to evade the unfortunate position of being beholden to her man's earnings to keep well above the valley of debt.

Nothing so humiliating and degrading should be her lot as an announcement that some ungrateful husband or another had firmly decided not to be responsible for her liabilities. Far better to wear the silk stockings of an artificial life than to choose to dishonourable financial disaster a finer quality with openwork clox. Would nine-tenths of the world

of women prefer to sit in a maternity gown expectant with a monthly nurse, or tread the firm measure up the aisle of Westminster following the footsteps of Lady Astor, who has, however, long since obtained the maternity degree up to the sixth form? I wonder? even though Gradgrind said, "Never wonder"; but there are so many inducements to-day to deny him right.

I find cause in the failure of my pet project to reform the reproductions of fashions in newspapers. I desired to photograph them even while realising the many accomplished pens and brushes devoted with skilful art to the task. Failure was my lot, my efforts being despised and rejected by the majority of advertisers.

However, the experience was interesting to me, for amongst the many slips of girls of no bulging outlines selected to sit as model for an illustrated catalogue of underclothes is the wife of one of our well-known actor-managers to-day.

That poor murdered "Babs" Taylor too would good-naturedly come over to my Bond Street studio and pose for me in novel millinery, and she was so pretty too, and an adept at the rare art of adjusting a toque to exactly the right angle.

No less generous again was Miss Kelly, then of the Gaiety Theatre, who sat for me once in a kimono which was reproduced in colour in a catalogue. But coloured or not, bad or excellent, assisted as I was all gratis by amiable and beautiful girls, the idea never caught on. Trade would have its more idealised way, the perfect outline which seldom grew on land or flourished at sea, and the natural figures were too accurate to please; the only exception, persistently

appreciative of the camera for fashion work, is The International Fur Store, which yet issues illustrations of furs photographically stamped to perfection—surface, texture and light and shade, shed by the lens upon most sumptuous skins of all kinds.

The special sympathy which exists between me and W. L. George arises I believe from our equal affection for clothes, for clothes and the woman I might say, since W. L. George's predilection for the feminine has taught him to understand her clothes with an educated taste cultivated in France, the land of his birth. In paying court, the Frenchman never leaves out of his programme the subtle flattery of his interest in the dress of his beloved. The Englishman is content to applaud the success of the selected, the Frenchman will assist personally to secure it, and will subsequently supply the righteous posy to grace becomingly both gown and girl.

W. L. George is the ideal husband who has never been known to turn a deaf ear, a blind eye, or an empty purse upon the possible truth of the cry, "I want a new hat." It is unimaginable that he should ever answer as other husbands might, "What's the matter with the one you're wearing?" Rather I can picture him leaving his house stealthily at once and alone to proceed down Regent Street, or to Hanover Street, or towards some private atelier—he is well acquainted with them all—to bring the desirable to the desiring, while he defies her not to like it. His instinct may be well trusted to that extent; or even as far as the complete trousseau his judgment would be right for the special aim of his beneficence, his choice inclining towards the bizarre which shall be remarkable and

remarked. I dare to assert this desire to produce the remarkable and the remarked has an influence alike upon W. L. George's politics, his misapplied patriotism and his diatribes against present-day drama.

He marshals his notions deliberately and with such statistics to prove them justifiable that we must needs sit to attention. "Too many babies and too many books" can sum up his attitude towards the obtaining conditions in economics and education. But W. L. George and I were not bent on discussing either of these, when I first saw him inclining affectionately towards courtship on a steam launch on the river, with a hostess blatantly concerned about the effect of his advances on an unendowed relation who had been marked "for money only" in the marriage market.

I have never understood the foundation for the romantic success of W. L. George, but none can refuse to admit its existence. Women become devoted to him, and would go to any lengths to promote his welfare abroad and his comfort at home. Mayhap his twinkling steel eyes combine with the expert methods due to long practice to bring the reward due to patience, but since I like W. L. George very much and gratify most gladly his taste for the best plum cake whenever he offers to come to tea with me, I try to believe his ugly confessions viâ *Ursula Trent* are founded on figments of his brain and not on facts of his fortune.

"Why do you write such books as your *Bed of Roses* and *Ursula Trent*?" I asked him one day, and he replied at great length, as he will when encouraged.

And was he not then in training for a lecture tour in America?

"I write them because I hope they interpret life as it is, beautiful life, hideous life, just life. If a writer has any claim to be called an artist he must be the showman of life : he must hold up the mirror to life. It is not his business to amend the reflection which appears in his mirror. Saints or harlots, scenes in the bower of Amaryllis, or under the gallows, it's all the same to him. I do not care whether my words hurry young women 'along the road to ruin' or 'arouse them to better things.' Where the young women spend eternity is their affair, not mine. My affair is to tell the truth."

"All right," I acquiesced—it is really hopeless to argue with W. L. George—"perhaps there is some excuse for your intimate revelations, but will you mind if I mention I prefer you 'Making an Englishman' than you when unmasking a courtesan? I admire you so keenly in your 'Second Blooming' that I wait with impatience for your third, which shall explain you as the good, the courageous, tender-hearted fellow you really are."

Of course, like all good authors, he wants to write for the stage, and we were discussing the essential tricks of the trade at the Court Theatre one night, and after a performance there of *Twelfth Night* I offered to introduce him to James Bernard Fagan.

Congratulations were resounding on all sides, and they were genuine, which is not the adjective invariably appropriate to felicitations rendered under such conditions.

I should say that behind the scenes had echoed more elaborate lies than even the House of Commons on



JAMES BERNARD FAGAN

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Budget day, the counters at Strand bars, or the walls of the boudoir of my lady, in full confidence with her dearest friend.

After all, how can you, knowing all the trouble and the anxiety which go to theatrical performance, deliberately visit the promoter to mention the faults he had so laboriously committed?

Nothing of this, however, went to that special meeting with James Fagan. *Twelfth Night* was a consummate success, and then, as now, I am convinced that should the National State-Aided Theatre ever have birth, which it will not, the ideal leader endowed by nature, art, personality and industry—my word, what eulogy, almost gush!—is James Fagan. Ecce Homo, albeit irreverent, is all-righteous.

I take James Fagan's work for granted, and dwell awhile upon his simple attraction intellectual and physical, inclusive of his softly tucked evening shirt-front and his gold-lighted Carpentier *coiffure*, and knowing him a rabid Irishman, I recognise that a nice dash of flattery goes to enhance his intimacy. I like him to come and sit beside me and talk to me of finance, while we confess to each other that the book we most detest is a fully made up bank-book, and that we regard good acting and playhouses with literary ambition as amongst the things worth striving for.

His beautiful wife sings like an angel and acts with a sense of true comedy, which almost vitalised Heart-break House. She suffers sadly the outrageous accusation of being a self-appointed leading lady, which she most certainly is not. Yet she bears the slander amiably, whilst deeply conscious that "Jim" is the faithful culprit. She is a confirmed entertainer

within her spacious marble-floored music-room so surprisingly tacked on to her seventeenth-century house in Chelsea, where the tapestry arras hangs as appropriate introduction to the fine old carved staircase and some bountiful banquets of my greedy memory.

James Fagan and I were discussing the future of theatres with an optimism essential to their existence at all when he told me a characteristic tale of Tree.

“Many years ago, having just returned from a two years’ sojourn in Italy, I met Tree outside His Majesty’s Theatre. I told him I thought of taking up acting again and suggested I should play Cassio in a revival of *Othello* which he was then contemplating. He looked very interested, and replied, ‘Yes, yes, I should like to talk to you about that. Come and drive with me.’

“We got into a hansom, drove to an address in Mayfair, and on the way I strove to improve the occasion, but Tree would talk of nothing but himself as *Othello*, and I could not get a word in edgeways. When we got out, Tree paid the driver too much, and as I drew breath for a final effort, he placed two limp fingers affectionately below my collar and murmured :

“‘What a beautiful tie!’ then bounded up the steps and disappeared.”

CHAPTER XIII

ABOUT H. G. WELLS, CONSTANCE COLLIER, SIR HERBERT
TREE, HAROLD BEGBIE AND SIR GERALD DU MAURIER

“**D**RAT this man Wells,” said the charwoman, who was assisting to put my shelves in order. “Whatever did he want to write so many books for?”

Thus may a genius be blamed by a slut, but there is great preponderance of Wells amongst my cherished volumes, which include nearly all he has written, many of these being inscribed with absurd drawings and inappropriate testimonials to our mutual affection, which seems to grow by what it does not feed on, being the more emphatically expressed when we do not meet.

These times I do not often see Wells in *propria persona* if he has one. His is a programme of here to-day and gone to-morrow over diverse countries and continents, for he is liable to be called upon to re-adjust the affairs of Russia whilst he waits there for a week, and to settle the international policies of Washington after dispelling the fogs in the English and Irish Channels.

The poor overworked fellow is all the time most obviously anxious to write novels peacefully at home where dwell his incomparable helpmate and two sons to prove that his educational theories are sound working propositions.

My first meeting with Wells was many, many years

ago, when a little world was daring to blame him for his too frank revelations in *Ann Veronica*, and I had felt very sympathetic towards him for being misunderstood by those who never understand genius should be accorded special favour. Genius is rare, and when genius, as in the case of H. G. Wells, is allied to originality, to imagination, to industry and to science, it must be permitted to wander a little down the by-paths of its choice, while it should be sheltered from the vulgar slanders uttered by the Peeping Toms, who see the less the more they look.

When did I first meet Wells, who rapidly became to me H. G., as so many who don't know him persistently refer to him? It was at the house of one of the Wertheimers, made famous by the illuminating art of J. S. Sargent, whose pictures of a large family of them adorn their dining-room laughingly called "the Sargents' Mess." Anyway I approached him familiarly enough, being so well read in him I felt he was an old acquaintance, and we were waiting together for our dear missing hostess, whose preferred practice was unpunctuality.

Wells was standing on the rug, his legs apart, his hands restless, his glance alert.

"I know you are Wells, and I am very glad to meet you."

He asked my name, to confess frankly he had never heard it, when I boldly ventured :

"Don't mind about me ; talk about yourself. Tell me of your next book."

Wells' ultra-blue eyes glared at me.

"I would as soon take off my clothes," was an astonishing answer to herald friendship.

I went one day to hear Wells lecture at some club or another in Oxford Street, the subject being "The first duty of a writer," which he held to be the impression of your times upon your books, the stamp of contemporary life upon all your pages. He has wandered far since then, any dutiful limitations being disregarded in the *Outline of History* which has come into its stupendous existence.

After the lecture at tea-time it was amusing to hear Wells tell that he had been stopped on his passage-way by a clergyman, who assailed him, "I have enjoyed very much hearing you speak, Mr. Wells, and I have wanted for a long time to meet you, but in spite of what you have said just now I cannot find any justification for your book *The Yoke*."

The dear old gentleman had mixed up H. Wales with H. G. Wells, and the contention of the former had been that he might claim as a legitimate subject for public reading the love of a mother, so protectively overwhelming that it had urged her to the sacrifice of herself rather than her son should brave the consequences of the more casual temptation.

H. G. was horrified to be thus confounded, but was persuaded to see the fun of it. You can generally persuade him to see the fun of anything, that is what is so jolly about him, always genial, ready to please and be pleased, never self-important. It is impossible to feel as stupid in his company as you know yourself out of it. He is more stimulating than the best tonic ever concocted in the best laboratory, while Coué with his gospels is a mere fool to him as restorative; even the least acute may well count him possessed of twin pituitary glands.

A concluding virtue to add to his catalogue is his prompt reply to letters, and even whilst he was in America, where I sent him congratulatory word upon his dignified exit from the trammels of super editing while I finished my letter with, "Would you not like to write the preface to my book?" he replied by return of mail and all characteristically, "No prefaces, darling, beauty unadorned is adorned the most. Love, H. G."

That is the best of Wells, he will write such compromising notes. I take a sheaf of his cards from a bundle, hoping to find one at least which will not give away the unquestionable fact of our mutual devotion. Each resembles the other.

"Beloved, I am working and working like God, but I shall see you soon. H. G."

"Dearly beloved, just back from Russia, and I must sleep for a week. My car stands outside this afternoon at six all saddled and bridled. You have my heart, and I am all yours. H. G."

Both these communications have I am sure been posted by his wife called Jane, because her name is Catherine, who is one of the dearest little women, and so clever in her wide knowledge of her husband, and certainly very pretty, with a nice taste in clothes; and happily regarding me as I am, amongst the most devoted of H. G.'s many admirers, without the least inclination to play with him the deplorable antics of a grey kitten.

I seem to be in a bad way, for I find so much excuse to like my friends. Then after all, perhaps I should



H. G. WELLS

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not have selected them had I not found some inducement. Dozens of them crowd upon my mind, each possessed of some quality or another, so that I am driven to quote from Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, "I count myself in nothing else so happy as in a soul remembering my good friends." I don't believe I am deserving of the verdict, "She has not an enemy in the world, but her friends don't like her," I am sure they do, but perhaps they won't after this book is published. Hope and despair are in the thought, and since I am a confirmed Londoner I fear that they may come along and break my windows with my heart by stones to testify to their disapproval.

A constant absentee who contrives to retain the affection nevertheless or because, is Constance Collier, who has a well-developed talent for friendship, and not even her many years' absence in America and her prolonged wanderings in the provinces of England succeed in obliterating her from the mind. All hail and welcome seem to be attached to her. Everyone is always glad to see her. She never loses her place in our affection, although her presence is so deliberately intermittent we feel glad of it. It is a very handsome presence too which may account in a measure for our joy at its approach, and I was looking at her recently while she was stretched upon my sofa resting between two performances, and I was wondering whence had come the general impression that she is a Jewess.

"You haven't really any Jewish blood in your veins at all, have you, Connie?" and she assured me none, whilst declaring that she should have had some gratification in being found guilty.

"Why not, indeed, when Sarah Bernhardt, Rachael,

Lily Hanbury and Julia Neilson have encouraged me to think that Jewish blood is no detriment to triumphant success in the art of acting ? ”

“ What is the favourite part you have ever played ? ” I fell irresistibly into the interviewer’s attitude.

“ Peter Ibbetson. For years and years I dreamt of it and wanted to play it, and chafed at my inability until at His Majesty’s Theatre I got the chance at that All-Star Matinée which you should recollect, if you don’t, included Clara Butt’s first appearance on the legitimate stage and Lilian Braithwaite with Owen Nares to complete a cast quite remarkable.”

“ Are you serious in telling me that you preferred this experiment, which I know you repeated triumphantly in America, to the classic Shakespearean characters you played with Tree, or your vulgar *tour de force* as Nancy in *Oliver Twist* ? ”

“ Confession is bad for the body,” laughed Constance, “ but it was always wonderful to me to act with Tree. I had the greatest admiration for him, loved every fault of him, and perhaps he had a few. The fairy imaginative side of him appealed to me. I have known him do such fantastic things. Conceive him with a manager defaulting from the till and fleeing from justice with his detectives in pursuit, while Tree having ascertained his whereabouts forwards the criminal a large cheque so that he might escape arrest from the police he had sent to seize him. That was Tree.”

“ Tree was subject,” she said, with her eyes in the past, “ to moods. I recall him violently resentful of a thief in office who had filched from his wardrobe a splendid pair of black velvet curtains painted with

flames to surround Ulysses in hell. With much difficulty these were traced to a second-hand clothes dealer in Whitechapel where we journeyed one Sunday morning to retrieve them, but, alas for the flames of hell painted on black velvet! They had been sold, and were playing the part of Sabbatarian suits to half a dozen little boys we met in their full glory. Tree admired them immensely and refused with anger the proposition of their financial equivalent."

My personal acquaintance with Tree was comparatively slight, but I recollect one special occasion of his playing my host in the grill-room of the Carlton at the time he was rehearsing for *The School for Scandal*, and he brought from his pocket the copy from which he was learning his part, telling me it had been presented to him by an old lady, while he showed me annotations in the margin made by Kean and by Irving. Incidentally I supped with him admirably well. He was always a most generous host, would give me on demand the Royal box at His Majesty's Theatre, and when he was playing Peggotty and Micawber he came and sat awhile with me. Once when I conveyed H. G. Wells and his two young sons to witness *Richard II*, Tree sent for us all to come behind the scenes, and there was Tree at his very best in the company of children, who adored him naturally and whom he understood completely.

At the house of Arthur Bouchier when they were playing *Henry VIII*, Tree delivered himself of the jest, "I and Bouchier are Gag and May gag," in cheery acknowledgment of Bouchier's grins which never grew as his clothes and his beard might have, on Holbein's presentations of that polygamous pet.

Tree looked at me that night as if prophetically.
“ Why don’t you write a book ? ”

“ Why should I ? ” I protested modestly.

“ Just to call it *arrière-pensées*.”

But what a strange medley of creatures it has been my lot to encounter, and in approaching Harold Begbie I am inclined to say with the youngest of us, “ Thank God for my good dinner ”—feast almost would be a more appropriate word with so mixed a menu to acknowledge.

“ Love is the bridge between the two worlds.”

When Harold Begbie said this to me I was in the depths of despair, and I do not fancy he had the least idea what spiritual comfort his words brought to me then, and bring me yet.

Whatever part Harold Begbie may choose to play in life, he is a born priest, and he holds with the Greeks that all writing should be helpful and creative. I have met him and known him under many different circumstances, for he is an active man of affairs, but I never lose sight of him as a potential saviour of souls. Indeed his written and his spoken lines have done much to justify me in this belief, albeit there is a recreative side to him, and he loves wit. He has the knack of easy companionship, but I never know why he drifted complacently into mine for he is mainly serious. I have spent days with him down in his own home in the country, where a fine glass window is a shrine to the memory of a dear dead daughter, and where he dwells often upon his sad parting with her, but with no pang, always with increasing sweetness and the certainty of their reunion. I have sat with him in his study talking of literature and of journalism at which

he is adept, quickest and most accurate writer, with scenery included, and I have remonstrated with him severely upon his tenets of comfort without servants and his immovable conviction that domesticity is the better part of women.

Yet, on this last point, why should I seek to interfere? His wife is the happiest of wives, and his three girls are only too ready to help their father, whilst he is as anxious to encourage them in their diverse ambitions. One daughter, with a ferret in her left-hand pocket, is as assured of his interest as another occupied with composing charming poems, or a third with no other demand than his personal tendance upon her two new goats, and always he is conscious of the ministrations of their beloved mother.

I once initiated Harold Begbie into the delights of a dress rehearsal of Peter Ibbetson with luncheon to follow in the company of Constance Collier the heroine, and subsequently we all went out to supper together. But the theatre is not the righteous atmosphere for him, of course he must have his ambitions—what living author has not?—to write a good play. However, he is possessed of many other aims, and to him is attributed ten per cent of the books published anonymously.

"I don't believe he exists. I am sure he is a syndicate," I am accused when I talk of him.

"How perverse of you, Harold," I say, "not to put your name boldly to your works—'The M.. with a D.....,' 'L..... without S.,' and 'P.....d W.....s' might be so reasonably allied."

Harold Begbie has to his best credit much literature in aid of the Church Army, the Salvation Army, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, the Ragged School Union, and at

least a mile of print demonstrating his ability and will to achieve what is possible on the philanthropic path. He spares no personal trouble in his pursuit of the fitting and unfitting subject, and practically he does much which I know he would hate to be mentioned.

He used to write regularly for the daily press on industrial, social and theological questions, and he has journeyed from the North to the South of England to investigate factories and the conditions of working people.

Many amusing and topical novels bear his signature, and not a few of his poems go to the glory of many causes. So truly he may be acclaimed industrious as well as able, and often I am vexed that he should prefer to live in a distant Dorset and send me such unrepentant letter as this :

“ I doubt if we shall visit London for many months. I swore an oath in the train that I would never go another journey, and truly if the gods provide me with work enough to live on this hill-top, this cliff-top, I think I shall never budge a mile away.

Perhaps you will come to Swanage, or, if that is too blustering, to Bournemouth, where the sun shines and the east wind is *verboden*. If so, we will meet and discuss this good world.

And how good it is, Eliza, when we possess a big deep chair and shelves all round us crowded with books. I don't want to write any more ; but write I must, if only to buy books. I want to read, and read and read, sometimes going out to look at the sea, and sometimes looking up to choose the star I wish to inhabit when I quit this pretty planet. There is this great consolation

in age, it teaches us how simple are the things that really minister to profound happiness. I could write an ode to a Porcelain bath and a lyric to a glass of Chateau Leoville Barton.

God rest you merry. We all send affectionate good wishes. H. B."

I am tempted to wish he would diverge from his too conscientious courses. I should like to find him executing a mild fox trot on the roof of the Criterion; and, by the way, I wonder how he could bear the accurate information that professional dancing has been a chosen vocation of one gifted, handsome grandson of General Booth. The best-laid ancestral schemes have surely here gone sadly astray.

I cannot find anything more true to say of Sir Gerald du Maurier than that Irving would have been proud of him. As an actor who is a gentleman, who works honourably and industriously for his calling, who sports steadfastly for the good of his golf average, and works assiduously for the advantage of his art, there is none other to excel him, and he confutes every accusation of the carelessness of the theatrical manager by replying at once to the receipt of any manuscript or any letter of demand which may reach him.

He never boasts of the fact nor of any other but of his beautiful children. He does not often drive his motors to destruction, and he is an indefatigable chauffeur, and he bears calmly with a daughter on each knee, another at the side of him, and a wife whom he continues to admire, the many feminine advances towards his sentimental attention.

What an Admirable Crichton in which play now I

come to think of it he first met his wife, Muriel Beaumont, who still retains by some unrevealed secret, but I suspect just happiness, the bright look of her girlhood.

“If I belong anywhere,” said Gerald to me one day while we were lunching together previous to a matinée in Leicester Square, “it is to Hampstead, where my father lived and worked.” He has a deep-seated reverence for his famous father, George du Maurier, and much devotion indeed for all his family.

Anyone would want to belong to the house in Hampstead which Gerald now occupies, dated eighteenth century, and skilfully persuaded to look it, with its stone-paved courtyard, wide hall and broad carved staircase, and small-paned windows looking out upon smooth lawns.

But to me Gerald’s supremest virtue—and again I transgress by mentioning he has any—is my knowledge that he will never play *Hamlet*.

He is our king of comedy acting, legitimate successor to Wyndham, contemporary hero with Hawtrey, and unless he is tempted into some further crimes like *Raffles*, he threatens to remain a merry monarch for all to survey.

But little vanity goes to him, and he told me an amusing anecdote which proves it.

“After I had been ten years at Wyndham’s as actor-manager, with my rather long name emblazoned across the front of the theatre, one day when we were rehearsing *Dear Brutus* I suddenly remembered that I wanted to rehearse with a pipe. There was nobody about, so I ran out myself to a tobacconist’s immediately opposite the front of the theatre.

"The owner of the shop was very polite, and chose a very nice pipe for me (being a cigarette smoker I put myself in his hands), and feeling in my pocket for the money to pay for it, I found I had literally not a penny. I said would he mind if I sent the money across. He said, 'Where from?' I said, 'The theatre.' He queried, 'What theatre?' 'Wyndham's,' I replied. He looked doubtfully at me for a moment and asked, 'What's your name?' I told him. He thought for a minute and said, 'Well, it is a new one to me.' So I agreed, 'Oh, very well,' and I went across and got the money from the Box Office and came back with the pipe.

"I told the stage-manager about it, remarking, 'It is extraordinary how unobservant people are, that shop has been there ever since I have been at this theatre.' He said with rather a sly smile, 'What's the name of it?' I replied, 'I don't know.'"

CHAPTER XIV

ABOUT W. L. COURTNEY, MARY FULTON AND
GEORGE MOORE

I CONFESS to the convention of being at home on Sunday afternoons where the circle ever widens, and I hasten to mention that I have no desire to deserve that it should be said of me, "She thought she had founded a *salon*, but she had really opened a teashop."

But I can proclaim as fact that no Sunday is considered complete unless four o'clock finds W. L. Courtney ensconced in the corner of the sofa.

I believe that half of my visitors come on purpose to meet him ; I have noticed that not a few will watch the door until his arrival in the room which, however, takes place some moments after his knock at the door because he will stop upon the stairs to say amiable words to my handsome housekeeper, Mrs. King, who should be written down "superior," for she owned as grandfather a founder of one of the great soap factories ; but perhaps she is more important to us for her skill at frying fish in oil according to the Jewish fashion.

I cannot remember where and when I first met W. L. Courtney, but I suspect that it was at a theatre, for I am an irreclaimable playgoer, and for years he was dramatic critic to the *Daily Telegraph*.

Many a long—a very long—evening I have spent in

some seat near to his, and many a short—a too short—morning later we have passed on the Thames, which is a favourite haunt for us both. Sculling was amongst his athletic activities, though he would as disdainfully regard my comment on his prowess as he would my frivolous observation on the becomingness of his brass-buttoned blue coat and his faded pink Leander cap.

Here recently our riparian inclination found us at ease on cushioned chairs in pompous possession of a launch at Bourne End, where R. C. Lehmann, Oxford oarsman and celebrated coach at Oxford and Cambridge and of University crews at Dublin, Berlin and Harvard, lives with a gracious wife, daughters and a young son threatening to follow his father's footsteps on the towing path to triumph on the waterways. During tea with them in the shelter of the wide window which looks upon the flower-girdled lawns, the girls told of their content at Girton, and Mr. Courtney, all unconsciously assuming the gown of the Don, showed considerable interest on the classical side and some concern for feminine intrusion with the oar, while shuddering at the idea of women in shorts.

W. L. Courtney has always been as much interested in sport as in the theatre, and both were early loves. It was due to his intervention that Jowett consented to allow dramatic performances at Oxford with the wives and daughters of the citizens appearing in the plays. Here with Arthur Bouchier he took his share in establishing the O.U.D.S., an institution still flourishing, and the archives chronicle that W. L. Courtney played Bassanio to Bouchier's Shylock.

He and I share many tastes and possess many mutual

friends. Proudly I stood godmother to his delightful book, *In Search of Egeria*, and we both count Norfolk happy hunting ground in holiday time. When I was there, a mere idler, he would go with his daughter for that uninterrupted morning of work which the writer is ever seeking and seldom securing. In the afternoons, should the good golf of his desire prove unattainable, we would walk at West Runton, or in Sheringham Park, where once we stayed our footsteps under a great tree, facing burly bushes of rhododendrons in red, pink and purple profusion, and he read aloud his one-act play, *The Webs of Penelope*, destined for Marion Terry.

His busy pen cannot resist always the lure of the stage, and to his credit stand *Kit Marlowe* and *Markheim*, adapted from R. L. Stevenson for H. B. Irving. For him Lilian Braithwaite pleaded *On the Side of the Angels*, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell gave her efforts to *Undine* in London and the provinces.

W. L. Courtney prevails here on Sundays when there is competition with maid and matron for the pleasure of giving him his tea, although he protests lazily he can get it himself, knowing well such conduct would never be permitted.

In our argumentative moments—we are prone to these even though they be buttered as thickly as the crumpets—he displays a gentle tolerance for all propounded views, and no better chairman for a peace conference could be imagined than “Bill,” as we most of us dare to call him with an impertinence we recognise when Lady Tree comes in to greet him, “Professor, I am so glad to see you,” the address being well sanctified in capital letters. I regret I do not more often see Lady Tree. She is responsible for many of the

best jests ; did she not announce when Sir Herbert engaged that distinguished pair Ellen Terry and Mrs. Kendal to play *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, " Herbert is preserving ancient lights."

Did she not sum up existence, " Nothing comes off in life except buttons," but I must not omit to mention that I am really very jealous of her, because she writes the most admirable articles upon dress, and she is quite capable of materialising her statement, " Give me a dozen yards of white *crêpe de Chine* and I will guarantee to make a gown which shall express any century."

She is a most clever woman, and her interpolations while she was acting in *Diplomacy* did something for the reputation of Sardou as a humorist.

It was said of W. L. Courtney up at Oxford that although he was a Don with due attribute of detached dignity he was for ever an undergraduate at heart. Strong characteristics do not disappear, they develope, he remains an undergraduate at heart, and in any company where he may be—he inclines towards the ladies—you will find the youngest clustering around him, and it must be admitted that he talks to them with more obvious pleasure than he will to his contemporaries, even though these should tempt his memories by allusion to his splendid waltzing in his prime.

At the Royal and Literary Societies, where he holds potential position, Mr. Courtney lectures regularly upon many subjects from Euripides to Pinero, and he contrives somehow to engage attention from an audience, however uninstructed.

As a critic W. L. Courtney has the rare gift of not only realising what the author accomplishes, but what

it had been his intention to accomplish. His knowledge is based on the classics which are in him, and he is an encyclopædia of information ; a man of learning and of teaching, and above all enchantingly human and everlastingly young, turning more gladly now to the lighter side of things, and admitting that beauty makes irresistible appeal to him. Nobody is a more gracious guest, and considering his intellectual equipment his adaptability to every sort of individual is amazing.

Under his encouragement I have contributed to *The Fortnightly Review*, and joined a symposium on the New Woman invited by the *Daily Telegraph*.

Further I venture.

“ Dare I write about you, the real you, in my book ? ” and with a shrug of submission to the inevitable he replies, “ I suppose I must bear it.”

It is difficult to do justice to him, for he is a man of many sides, and whilst he is ever the courtly urbane gentleman with a touch of Colonel Newcome about him and never free from the old academic traditions, he is persistently alert for to-morrow. He is of an unfaltering faith, and his intimacy with the Scriptures to which *The Literary Man's Bible* testifies is as profound as his respect for them ; his appreciation of the supreme beauty of the writing in Isaiah and the Song of Solomon never swerves, and his most consoling philosophy preaches :

“ Life is a shedding of leaves,” an axiom which happily has as yet no significance for that merry being Mary Fulton, who is a frequent intruder near by W. L.'s seat upon the sofa here.

Head of copper, heart of gold, intellect of steel, but



W. L. COURTNEY, M.A., LL.D.

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nothing else metallic goes to the author of *Blight* and *The Plough*, a soft resilient creature who should be ashamed of her persisting idleness, for she has undoubted ability to enter permanently into the field of fiction, yet bides her time slothfully, even while St. John Ervine is here to assure us that of all literary expression the novel is most meet for the lazy.

"Everybody writes, why must I?" says Mary Fulton when I try to stem the flood of her frivolity, of her wander lust and her athletic proclivities. Perhaps she has reason in her opinion that youth must not be balked, and she is as adorably youthful as she is persuasively pretty, while at least she is a hard reader, but she is sure that Robinson Crusoe was a greater hero than Hannibal, and is best persuaded of the charm of continental literature with Anatole France to the fore.

"Are you mystic?" says the imaginative man as he looks into her mischievous eyes as men will, and she illustrates Rudyard Kipling's theory that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male"; but of course she is not mystic, although her Irish blood jumps gladly to the idea. She is really a most material little person, with an infinite capacity for enjoyment, served with surplus cash. She is glad to be alive at twenty-six with every conceivable advantage to her name, with the husband of her early choice and a dear child to adore. She is a joyous circumstance, and her nice red head pokes into my room once a day, for she lives next door, and since she is a practising pianist I am delighted to welcome her absence from home. Sheer joy goes to her while she is relating with native wit tales of her adventures, real and fictitious, now and

again inadvertently confessing to her charity and practical pity for the weakness of others less fortunate than herself. She will write yet, and well, the doom is upon her, but now she shares with me an incorrigibly flippant outlook upon grave subjects.

I like to cast myself as the clown, however serious may be my company, and although George Moore exercises great influence upon me he has never been able to persuade me that the jest is not the highest form of mental exercise. On Sundays in my room no one watches the door more anxiously for W. L. Courtney than does George Moore, who is possessed of admiration not alone for his skill as critic and editor, but for his value as universal provider of agreeable conversation.

It is easy to suspect the impatience of George Moore at W. L. Courtney's great inclination towards trivialities rather than towards earnest argument about literature.

George Moore stands always for literature, he is not deeply concerned with anything else, and it is certain that personalities and politics are alike amongst his indifferences. On pictures he has excuse to be didactic, for he knows much about them, and has declared "painting to be the most indiscreet of all the arts." Yet he decided that Mona Lisa came into her possession of eternal life through the immortality of Pater's prose.

He is sensitive to music, and in the full flight of his enthusiasm dogmatised "to hear Wagner one must hear him where he chooses to be heard, one has to leave all things and follow him to Bayreuth."

Yet when there he records as his first thought on

being presented to Madame Wagner in her late fifties, "Am I going to run away with her?"

He claims as virtue that he is the only Irishman who never made a speech, but he can be very eloquent when interested in his topic, while he is perennially in earnest, whether tilting at his indulgent friend Edmund Gosse, or abusing cab whistles, or deploring the casual invitation, or resenting the natural habit of the natural dog.

He is ever of original and unusual thought, which he dresses and undresses in unusual words. His conclusions are unexpected, and I recall him, in the earlier days of the war, waving the subject out of his sight and hearing as being too unpleasant to contemplate or to discuss.

"All this chattering during a storm in a dark forest must cease and the sun must come out, and beautiful naked nymphs will go down to bathe in the bright waters."

His slightest word-pictures even of a pain in his chest eased by a parlourmaid and a poultice, are so vividly incised that they sink as indelibly into the memory as his wonderful account of his passage across the Irish Channel and his historic search for pyjamas.

"George," I make the announcement with fear, "I am going to write a book about myself."

"Eliza," he said with a cautionary hand, "write it in English," and he continued with apologetic intention, "you know the language you speak is not English."

I admitted the hard judgment with a soft consciousness that I am very fond of George Moore, and

although he persists in being always a loiterer on the lowlands of love, I am convinced that he deeply respects and admires woman. Has he not written, "Without women we should be all reasonable, there would be no instinct. And a reasonable world—what would it be like? A garden without flowers, music without melody."

His eyes gleam, his white hair drops a shade lower on to his brow, and he chortles into his chin whilst he encourages me :

"You must tell all about the men who have proposed to you." I protest that this might fill a line rather than a volume, for I surmise that it was I who, in the words of Shylock to Tubal, first made suggestion to the dark and diffident lover who became my husband, "Meet me at our Synagogue."

"No one has proposed to me anything—except that they should read to me from a manuscript of their own making."

I entreat George Moore's credence.

"I will never believe it," and with subtle flattery he pursues the phantom of my far-reaching fascination ; but this is merely pretty George's way. To feed the gluttonous vanity of woman he pretends that he thinks she is a compendium of conquests and that each move in all her games might be punctuated justly with a line of asterisks.

After I had known George Moore in those days at my brother's when "Pan" was born, and the *Sporting Times* was in full bloom, he went again to live in France and in Ireland, and we lost each other while Julia and he had some controversy about *Doctor Phillips*.

The wrongs and rights of the dispute are of small

matter, but to Julia quite inadvertently, George Moore owed something of the details of the tragedy of *Esther Waters*.

I remember sitting with them together in an old vicarage garden at Staines whilst he read to us the first chapter of this book which was destined to become his most popular. He is an indefatigable worker towards his own high standard, and although he may discuss what he will write, he deprecates any praise of what he has written. No trouble has ever been too much for George Moore to take to secure accurate information. In that long ago he intrigued for an interview with a resident wet-nurse, who had fallen from grace to Queen Charlotte's hospital. "*Une petite faute*," he muttered as he followed her across the lawn.

I found George Moore again after many days when I cast him upon the waters of Babylon, to receive later a record of a ride on an Arab steed neither swift nor sure; he told vividly of rubble, rubble, rubble over a valley up a winding path to the monastery where the Abbé had stood to receive him, and he looked around, and shut his eyes and begged them to remember.

In a copy of *The Brook Kerith* which provoked this journey he wrote :

"MY DEAR ELIZA,

If you had not encouraged my departure for Palestine, and I was very unwilling to go, this book would not have been written.

With very many thanks, I remain,

Your affectionate old friend,

GEORGE MOORE."

It is a mere *cliché* now to observe that he is our greatest master of English narrative prose, this being declared alike by the few able to recognise its truth and the many who have never turned a page he has written. I might be guilty of not being amongst the first, but I have read most of his writings and listened to him whilst he has projected many others not yet consigned to the printed page. Rumour declares his proof corrections more extensive than his manuscripts, whilst his practice of writing and rewriting, publishing and republishing is amongst the chances I get to chaff him, that in his interest I may become a collector of last editions.

George Moore may take a lenient view of my levity, whilst we sit together after other guests have departed, his face alight in the glow of the fire, and all tolerant of my ignorance with due regard for my prejudices, he will inform me lightly in the French classics. He may even expurgate Jean Jacques Rousseau and bowdlerise Balzac for my better instruction.

He is without guile, properly understood by a very few, and he will tell me how much he likes Jews while explaining that he is attached to me because I possess none of their traditional features.

He has written "that we do not grieve for the dead because they have been deprived of the pleasures of this life, but because of our own loss."

So that when he said to me, "You must not be ill because I shall miss you very much," I am assured of his simple egotism and proud to believe his words to be true.

"Eliza," he said, turning back from the door on the

day I announced my book to him, and while advancing gravely under the chandelier, "light writing need not be bad writing; why don't you write like Sterne or Heine?"

Ah! why don't I?

CHAPTER XV

ABOUT LILIAN BRAITHWAITE, SIR GEORGE AND LADY
ALEXANDER, ISIDORE DE LARA, AND ROBERT BENNETT

“ **M**ARRIED ? Nonsense,” I said to my in-
former, who persisted.
“ Oh yes, a year ago.”

Case of sixteen and just out of the nursery here, I decided.

Such a pretty young thing was Lilian Braithwaite when she first danced into my sight at a ball at the Empress Rooms, where she was wearing a fancy dress of the Moorish type, and her profile beneath a little turban of red and gold gave my æsthetic sense no little satisfaction.

“ Same profile ? ” asked Lilian, smiling at me when I recalled our initial meeting.

“ Exactly similar, you haven’t altered at all.”

“ Oh, well I ought to have, but you have seen me so frequently you would not have noticed it, and if you had, you are so amiable you would not have mentioned it.”

Hard-headed young woman that ! not sufficiently susceptible to adulation, being overfed perhaps, as actress and philanthropist, for her career spells much success, and the force of her character can be recognised to the benefit of many professional movements. When necessary she plays her part as chairman, orator

and organiser, and it is amongst theatrical beliefs that she is a mascot. Wherever she acts the long run can be confidently anticipated, but for me whatever special pleading she may urge in the *Bill of Divorcement* for happiness *minus* a mad husband, her best work is done on the classic comedy side.

Her Lady Teazle and her Portia are spontaneously joyous to my humour, but there is yet to my regret the absence of her Beatrice from London presentation, even whilst I remember with respect the calm and soothing beauty of her Madonna in *The Miracle*.

She is a complex creature is Lilian Braithwaite, firm in her opinions and her conduct, upright to the last letter of the word, strong despite the ethereal touch to her beauty, and she must be accorded recognition as a good loser, which is after all an unusual quality to be possessed by an artist.

She is a sportswoman, proving it bravely in her married life, and no less conspicuously when in all generosity she joined me to meet with utter disaster, in the only trading enterprise I ever undertook. The whole conduct of the affairs of this was placed with me, and was very soon supported by the voluntary, even insistent contribution of a bundle of bad debts from many of my most fervent admirers, who would bring all their friends to demand lowered prices by reason of their personal acquaintanceship. Feminine friends may play the deuce in shopkeeping by the amateur! Madame Mauve, Ltd., which was dedicated to accessories before the fact of undressing did not at any time reach the prosperity I prophesied as inevitable, and it most clearly failed to deserve any during war-time

when uniforms were the only wear and the best-laid *lingerie* was at a wholesale discount. Up the stairs came the bailiff, down the windows went the shutters, and it is splendid to relate that no one member of the little band of feminine financiers who had so hopefully and faithfully planked down their money blamed the other, or cast a stone of reproach at their incompetent managing director. That was a fine feat in womanly reticence, and Lilian Braithwaite with Gertrude Kingston should receive some special order of merit for their exemplary patience, and the generosity extended with a gentle sympathy for me, the offender-in-chief, with the women's army perhaps as the plausible auxiliary to the final annihilation of my hopes.

I always associate Lilian Braithwaite in my mind with the St. James's Theatre, for during some long time she was leading lady there with Alexander, whose adorers were legion, whether he produced romantic or psychological drama ; and there is no doubt that in giving us *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* he qualified and passed with honours as a pioneer in presentation of the lady with a lurid past and a disconnected present.

Alexander was under the management of Irving for some time, going straight to him from the Kendals to play Caleb Deecie, the blind man, in *The Two Roses*, and he was wont to be very amusing about his experiences during his first rehearsals at the Lyceum.

"Not quite so much Piccadilly, my boy," Irving would say to him when, clad with his customary care, he walked with fashionable swing across the boards.

"Not quite so much Piccadilly," Alexander would

repeat this with great gusto, whilst he would also tell of a valuable lesson given to him when he was hurriedly rattling through his words as Faust.

"No, no, Alexander, that won't do, too quick, too quick, think of the little boy in the back of the gallery who has paid his sixpence to hear you. You should always think of him, and be quite sure that he does hear you."

Comment on the perennial value of such teaching would be superfluous.

Alexander was a fine producer, and no theatre was ever conducted with more complete decorum than was St. James's under his management, where many fine actors progressed to fame. Fred and Julia Neilson, H. B. Irving, H. V. Esmond and Fay Davis are amongst the few I think of hurriedly. He took infinite pains with the younger members of his company, and he was a man of aspiration and ideals of every kind, tempered, however, with a strange racial caution.

He obtained more uninterrupted success than most managers, and I have heard a lady enthusiastically declare that :

"So long as any act in any comedy shows me Alexander with a broad red ribbon across his evening waistcoat I shall go and hear him once a week."

But although I might have held that sentiment, I fell under his displeasure inadvertently, but deservedly. Somehow or another I appear to have collected dramatic critics, the desire to do so owing with its accomplishment to my constant appearance at all the first performances of plays. I was grateful for the chance to hobnob with anyone attached to a theatre, but my gossiping habits led me sadly into disgrace,

and through that disgrace most happily to the intimate friendship of George Alexander.

It was on the first night of that ill-treated drama *Guy Domville* by Henry James that I might have been heard talking volubly to old Joseph Knight, doyen of the critics then, and chaffed so aptly when he made a super-autobiographical speech at a public dinner.

“Joe Knight had a thousand I’s.”

George Alexander wrote to me protesting against my adverse prattle, whilst acknowledging that he realised I had no conception what harm might be done in uttering thus loudly amidst a crowd of newspaper reporters.

I was deeply penitent and received the reward in excess of my sin.

“Will you come to breakfast at eleven o’clock to-morrow?”

Many times I enjoyed hospitality from Alexander and a never-failing welcome from his wife.

Lady Alexander remains a very well-known figure in social life, ringing the changes of fashion in black and white and grey, which she affects exclusively without the least monotony. In many benevolent causes she sells programmes, heading her bevy of beautiful assistants with such elaborate elegance that we call her affectionately “our chief bridesmaid.”

The way she raked in the shekels during the war was wonderful; no one could resist her appeal, and she would make as much as two hundred to five hundred pounds in an afternoon. She was indeed so well recognised as Jill Sheppard of the road to order “stand and deliver cash” that once when she was sitting in a corner at the Coliseum upon no marauding intent

but merely to hear Alexander play in *Howard and Son*, three people upon seeing her put their hands in their pockets.

I have heard it mentioned that when she was on the most active service a tame capitalist gave her twenty pounds for a programme with a piteous request, "Do leave me twopence for my bus fare home."

The last time Alexander appeared on the stage he gave a beautiful study of *The Aristocrat* in the French Revolution, and there is evidence that he never suspected himself to be seriously ill, for he acquired all rights in Bernstein's last drama during the summer before he died.

I have often sat with Alexander between the acts in the ante-room to his dressing-room, whence he once emerged to give me a little terra-cotta bust of Irving, and to show me a larger one he possessed in bronze, a miniature of the life-size marble which the Earl of Plymouth had bought from Hampton. This bust is quite the best plastic likeness of Irving I have seen, and it was done after two sittings, and destined to form part of the big Victorian memorial group now standing in the town of Lancaster.

Alexander shared with Edward Terry, Augustus Harris and Walter Reynolds the responsibility of being the only men connected with the stage who took a practical part in municipal affairs. Alexander's election to the London County Council marked an epoch in new and valuable regulations and reforms, and he became the chairman of the Parks Committee with threats of retirement altogether from the stage, and an acceptance of an offered seat in Parliament.

His untiring energies in these directions whilst he was busy rehearsing and acting and producing plays and managing his theatre, unquestionably laid the foundation-stone of his mortal illness, which culminated so distressfully at the beautiful house he had built for himself in Hertfordshire overlooking those fairy woods of Chorley.

I have much testimony to Alexander's affection for me, signed photographs and innumerable letters, but what held him and his wife and me eternally together is the memory of that night when Irving was brought from Bradford to temporary rest at his flat in Stratton Street. There, Harry and Dorothea, Laurence and Mabel, and the Alexanders and I sat watching through the hours. Alexander, like all who worked for him, was deeply devoted to Irving.

As I stood by his side in the after years on the widespreading loggia facing the cherry tree walk at Chorley, the pity of his illness was almost unbearable. No man ever looked more beautiful, but none could see him and not understand the hopelessness of his condition, and the courage which went to the gaiety of his prediction that he would be at work again by Christmas. I held his arm whilst we strolled a little way down the path. He was very frail, yet walked uprightly, not leaning on his stick, and elegant yet in those immaculate grey tweed clothes, that irreproachable tie and the faultless collar which had been the envy of all fashionable manhood in town. But there was "not too much Piccadilly" then, and his white hair fluttered just a little in the wind as I left him standing in the porchway with his helpmate—no wife was ever better deserving of that title—and his whim-

sical smile to her and to me was unutterably sad. I was so sure we should never meet again. Although I wrote later when I was staying with the Irvings at Harrow he was unable to receive me, and with my love I had sent some cakes of unleavened bread which I hoped he might be permitted to enjoy, just before his pencilled word to me :

“ MY DEAR MRS. ARIA—and mine to you (love I mean) and grateful thanks for your kind thoughts of me. I had my accountant here or I should have been delighted to see you, though Harrow is a pretty long way. No, I have had very few visitors, and have not felt up to it. I have my ups and downs, at the moment I am in the latter and sent to bed again. I expect you are busy first-nighting. I have just consulted my doctor. He tells me I may eat the box you send, but not the contents. It shall sit by my bedside and I shall look forward to the time when I can dive into it and swallow the cakes with lots of butter. It won't be so very long I hope ; I was delighted to see you, bless you.

Yours ever,

GEORGE ALEXANDER.”

The beginning of my acquaintance with Isidore de Lara was not more propitious than my initial introduction to Sir George Alexander.

My ignorance of the art of music not being properly concealed beneath a bump of reverence for it, I have suspected that many go to church for the pleasure of hearing themselves carol rather than for the better part of prayer. However, I know I was badly to blame when a kindly hostess frowned at me for giggling at

the significant emphasis in De Lara's beautiful voice whilst he was singing "The Maid of Athens," but ere we parted I had made amends. The Victorian era took its music with great decorum; it was considered exaggerated and even immoral to display any intensity of feeling while singing songs of love. De Lara was the first artist in England to sing in English of love as if he were really singing to the beloved without hypocrisy or restraint.

He was The Great Lover in song, and it is amongst his gratified ambitions as composer that his music inspires love.

De Lara took himself and his ideals to the Continent, where he made his reputation as writer of opera, and a quarter of a century sped before I saw him again after my unmannerly conduct condoned by me of me as due to the hysterical habit of the young girl.

All involuntary is my detachment from music, and my last active injustice towards it was that Czerny study which led my father to decide that mathematics should be my vocation. I have met in intimacy but few musicians; my early days were associated slightly with Tosti, with Arthur Sullivan and Liza Lehmann, closely with Charles K. Salaman, Frederick Cowen and with Hope Temple, ballad writer and one of the prettiest girls I ever saw, with much talent and bewitchment in her to promote a propensity for being betrothed to the well known in the land of harmony. She was successively engaged to four of these, ultimately marrying André Messager; and she would commiserate with me for being tone deaf, which, after all, is a misfortune rather than a crime, and it has deprived me of considerable pleasure "and of considerable pain"—



ISIDORE DE LARA

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whispers my tame cynic who is a confirmed highbrow in the world of Art.

But I can find no consolation in this nor in my kinship with the case of Doctor Johnson, nor in his theory that of all noises music is the most disagreeable. I sympathise with myself rather in my belief in Shakespeare's verdict on those "who have no music in their souls."

In writing of De Lara, therefore, I quote a few lines from an opinion of that consummate critic Camille Mauclair.

"No manifestation in Europe during the last forty years has left him indifferent; he has always been a student of the lyric stage, and his chief characteristics are the Oriental colouring and a feverish expression of passion which is unlike the violence of the 'morbid-ezza' of the romantic school, and resembles in no way the coarse sexual exteriorisation of the Italian realists. It is an expression of the heart, and is always the outcome of an inspiration. He loves the stage, never separating his music from the drama. He is master of all the resources of the theatre; he is a master of melody. On the perfect blending of the voice and the orchestra this composer attains a high degree of perfection."

Ashamed I admit to a greater susceptibility to "The Garden of Sleep" than to the finest passage of the love duets in his acclaimed *Messaline*; I remain more capable of appreciating De Lara as a friend than as a musician, but as a man he is elusive in his moods, as varying as the really ever constant woman is supposed to be. He is a capital talker and a willing; but while you think you have wholly enchained him and he is

beaming upon you with the benevolent mote, all unlike the praying king in *Hamlet*, his thoughts fly up, his words remain below. If you are observant you are aware that mentally he has wandered away pregnant with song on to some wild and open sea.

That he remains a child of nature is amongst his charms ; he is never affected, he yawns when he is sleepy and he goes home when he is bored, although such gentle courtesy and grace accompany the yawning and the going, it is easy to forgive him, even to set about planning some social condition which may prove more congenial to him.

Labelled and libelled in young youth, *poseur*, no one was ever more simple and direct, suffering indeed from super-sincerity. You are on to a good thing when you enlist his partisanship for any cause, but if you are merely a dawdler on the threshold of some scheme he approves, beware of the forceful impetus of his advocacy. He will drag you relentlessly along to industry, to slavery may be, and inevitably to enthusiasm.

Devoting his energies during the war to needy musicians, he gave 1400 concerts and delivered himself of some eloquence at each, making his special plea the temporary divorce of German music from English ears. Gallant campaigner as he is for British music, he has now rescinded that absolute decree, confessing his personal joy at the restitution, which goes to prove that he is a sportsman as well as a patriot.

As a patriot he is double-hearted, owning France as deep in his love as England ; never was a caricature better deserved than the one perpetrated by Dulac, who showed him in strong or rather light boxing gear,

with the foremost foot sturdily planted in Paris and the hindermost in London. But did not someone write that "every Englishman of culture prefers to live in France"?

Although De Lara is a composer of music with no less than eight operas to his credit, he is always a student of literature, a philosopher who is no mere disciple, but an advanced walker by the way of earnest thought, and he is a fervid politician in three languages.

There is some cause to regret his glib efficiency in those three languages, if you wish to enjoy his conversation whilst you share a meal with him at a restaurant. He is of so cosmopolitan a custom that he is known to every foreign waiter in the room; he gets cordial welcome from each, whilst he orders his food in French, his wine in Italian, his cigar in English, and by the salaam of the Turkish coffee purveyor you may suspect him of being no stranger to Oriental experience. In every social gathering he is well met and largely individual. Combatant first and courtier afterwards, he is not inclined towards any stars of the stage nor possessed of much partiality for the *prima donna*.

All artist though he is, he has no care for beautiful belongings; his domesticity is stronger in theory than in practice; as surroundings he is well content with a piano, a large table, a deep easy-chair and some books, while his favourite outside view is a mountain in full snow—not always handy.

Men and women like De Lara for his candour and his comradeship; a fine man with a fine spirit, you are conscious that he would if he could secure you to comfort and protect you against ill. However sad you may have cause to be, his warm clasp of greeting tempts

you to hope and to a happy remembrance of those words :

“ What is between us two we know,
Take hands and let the whole world go.”

“ Love your editor as yourself so that your days may be long in the land of his ruling ” is a good enough motto for the journalist, and some excuse goes to such easy course with the literary director of *Truth*, Robert Bennett, under whose amiable auspices I have worked regularly these twelve years or more, and like *Charley's Aunt* I am still running.

What a record of indulgence given, and of course after this declaration more must inevitably follow ; but really editors are (and I have suffered many madly) not exactly angels, being better fitted for candidature in an acknowledged executioners' class. So drastic they may be when dealing with a sensitive contributor, so capricious and so unmindful and completely indifferent that the self-respecting chronicler hates to have a line transferred or a comma lifted. Mr. Bennett is punctilious in his apologies when he omits my most dearly beloved paragraphs—but he omits them. The benign and benevolent being who passes Mrs. A——'s diary, which counts weekly amongst my seven deadly sins, should be exalted mightily as the very model of a prime minister of print.

It is not for me to say how extremely well he writes upon political and criminal—happy union!—affairs ; no weakness escapes his busy pen, for his mind is as smart and dapper as his clothes, but despite his gentle aspect, he is shrewd, and has thrown many challenges to the unjust, the incompetent, and the dishonest in

high places, and met them bravely too in the Law Courts and in his official arena in Westminster.

I may be prejudiced, but I am convinced that no more courteous and kindly man ever sat in an editorial chair than Robert Bennett, who doubtless thanks his stars that I do not more often call to ask for "some" in advance, though when I thus transgress he wears for me perennially the nicest smile and incidentally the nicest neckties of blue and white spotted foulard.

He is possessed of an invincible desire to help everybody, perverting Polonius, rather a borrower than a lender be. He is not conspicuously attached to usurers, and I am aware that he beams upon my departure as gladly as upon my arrival, and I remember gratefully that he has made my Christmas merry by one bonus and my midsummer holiday the more enjoyable by another. May he continue

" Long to reign o'er us
Not too censorious."

And I quote from him with a vexed vanity :

" With all respect to the rest of the female branch of the profession, I consider that Emily Crawford never had an equal for range, literary finish, individuality and insight into men and things. And perhaps the most admirable thing about her from the editorial point of view—though I have known others who run her close in this respect—was her unfailing precision in the delivery of the ' copy ' when required, however adverse the conditions might be.

The most remarkable example of this was when in 1914, at eighty years of age, she was driven from her

home at Senlis by the invading Hun ; she made her way to Havre *en route* for England, and thence despatched her batch of ' copy ' for next week's *Truth*, evidently written on any odd scraps of paper that she could get hold of at the moment, and apparently in some restaurant or cabaret, where she had to use sand instead of blotting-paper."



SIR THOMAS BROCK, K.C.B.

DRAWN BY HIS SON EDMOND.

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CHAPTER XVI

ABOUT LETTERS AND POSSESSIONS

THERE is a famous lady who shall of course be nameless, which she will of course hate, now employed upon her Memoirs, and reported to desire of her publishers sufficient space to print all her love-letters. Some follies might be revealed here, but not necessarily deserving of account.

So few know how to write love-letters, and the science of love-making is rare too in England, but easily recognised when of the expert superior order learnt in France or Italy.

A pretty equestrian accompanied in the Row by her riding-master was greeted by a well-known artist in affection :

“ How beautiful you look up there,” and at least half a yard of compliment to follow.

Experienced riding-master, after the farewell had been poetically and reluctantly accomplished, looked at the departing figure with admiration, and commented :

“ ’E do know ’ow to tell the tale, don’t ’e ? ”

With those who would ever exalt yesterday above to-day the belief obtains that with the art of wooing, the art of letter-writing is dead : sheer calumny. It is not even moribund, nor does it sleep. It is as alive as the sculpture of Epstein, and the proletariat at play

under the brush of Nevinston, and it is indeed vastly improved since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when by the pompous with a passion for the prolix, correspondence flowed in elegant futility at the greatest length on the least provocation, and no one was safe from a screed of counsel or confidence or complaint with meteorological interruptions.

It always enrages me to read the constant cry of the bygone ladies for more letters from their husbands who appeared to miss the rare posts with great regularity, and for more frequent visits from reluctant lovers. The travelling suitor or suited was an asset in those days not properly appreciated. Happily we are less eager now, or more reticent, but certainly we are briefer in our methods of expressing ourselves, our longings, our physical ills and our emotional crises.

With only a three-halfpenny stamp in the house we have so accurately appraised the limit of essential words that we can convey emotion with atmosphere included upon a mere postcard.

The most sympathetic letter I ever read came from a lay pen, and from no lover either, just from one friend to another in sorrow, when a large bundle of white lilac held tight to its stalk a card inscribed, "All that I have and am is waiting to be called upon."

Of course the departure platform at railway stations echoes with "write soon," and of course there remain with us alien governesses and the ultra-capable American ladies to support the stationers and cover a quire or so weekly with anathema against our abominable climate, the graces and disgraces of fashionable society and the questions without answers to the domestic service problem.

But given a reasonable pretext such as business or love, how admirably now do the letter-writers comport themselves! and ever with that clear brevity which should stamp the former excuse, while the latter glows with sincerity, lacking the gush and reiterated epithet which formerly were prominent in disfiguring the epistolary interchange whenever love defaulters were arraigned in court.

It is rare now for the educated many to present a suit for breach of promise of marriage, more constantly is its fulfilment the occasion for the public delivery of the private desire, and legal authorities have settled the formula of farewell to the dull and uninteresting fiction of a demanded restitution of rights which have proved wrongs.

Julia was wont to say, "Unless Eliza receives each morning four letters from leading actresses which commence 'dearest' she looks unhappy."

Without contesting her point, which was of course as absurd as exaggerated, I find some foundation for it while turning over my boxes of letters. Why do I keep these? Not to prevent my executor from feeling dull, for I have issued a special bequest for their prompt burning.

But with the exception of H. G. Wells, who is of an incorrigibly affectionate nature (I must make a card index of his loving adjectives), I discover that my masculine correspondents are not quite so appreciative as my feminine.

I make a selection from these with all diffidence, finding amongst many interesting letters one from Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, with a rough sketch from his pen of the Irving statue as it was originally

intended to be, wearing a frock-coat with the masks of tragedy and comedy leaning against a pile of books or plays. Later, when all was readjusted, Sir Johnstone wrote to me :

“ Every time I pass the site I rejoice we got our way about that one. The statue would have been lost on the Embankment. There he would have been with several others ; at the back of the Portrait Gallery, where by the way many of his friends are, he will be alone, but hourly passed by vast crowds who loved him.”

I have been fortunate in a way in including doctors and dentists amongst my friends, and I have always been amused to learn that those patients on the free list invariably keep their cabs waiting. One doctor I know used to indulge my taste for entertainment by writing my prescriptions in verse. I shall just hope he doesn't read biography when I quote his last doggerel to excuse some delayed remedy :

“ 'Twas cruel to forget Eliza's tonic,
A lack of sympathy wellnigh Teutonic,
My addled brain is almost embryonic,
Soft before, its softness now is chronic.

But here in verse, I hail you all symphonic,
And gath'ring my scatter'd wits evolve a tonic.”

I have managed somehow to retain my old friends as well as to make new ones, but alas ! an exception to this most delightful rule appears to be W. J. Locke, whose books I faithfully read, whilst missing the man in the flesh, but, by the way, I don't believe he has any, at least none to speak of. Turning over my bundle I

find so many notes from him and such nice ones that I shall quote a few words to brave his anger.

“ Although I only go in boats on the understanding that no punting or rowing or horrid physical exercise shall spoil my luxurious enjoyment, believe me there is nothing I should enjoy more, and it is with very sighful regret I have to give up the pleasant prospect to see you at Cookham.”

More promising was the following :

“ I will abandon rural joys next Sunday. They were so sloppy and dippy this last week-end, and I will accept your invitation. Your parties are the pleasantest I know. The birthday of the successor of Septimus is dragging out a weary chrysalis existence in magazines, and will not burst out until the spring.—W. J. LOCKE.”

And his last proclamation allows the infringement of his copyright :

“ DEAR MRS. ARIA,

Quotation is the sincerest form of flattery, so how can I resist ?

Your letter takes me back to the delightful evenings I used to spend at your house. Oh those fugacious years.

I and mine are well ; I have settled down, I think for good, in this jumble of wonders known as the Côte d'Azur.

With kindest regards,

I am, yours sincerely,

W. J. LOCKE.”

I yield to the temptation to print a letter I received from Sir Arthur Pinero when I drew his attention to

some ignorant comments which had been printed in a leading newspaper about the influence of Irving on the stage.

We discovered that the writer was an expert on sport ! and yet I felt it was an outrage to permit his impertinence to go unreprimanded.

However, Pinero wrote :

“ Some day perhaps I will write about dear Irving ; but to engage in a newspaper controversy—for so it would be made—in the ‘ silly ’ season is not to my taste.

Very heartily I sympathise with your feelings in the matter. The articles are one-sided and most ungenerous.

I ask after you often, and have been grieved to hear you are not well. But I don’t believe *all* I hear, and so I hope you are the same bright creature I have always known.

Yours ever,

ARTHUR PINERO.”

And how encouraged I have been in my admiration for actresses. I remember once writing an article to insist how worthy they were of all admiration, and receiving the following acknowledgment from Violet Vanbrugh :

“ What a jolly article in the *Express*. I feel we all owe you thanks and our love. I never or rather very seldom see you, but in my heart there is always a warm corner for you.

Yours affectionately,

VIOLET VANBRUGH.”



ARNOLD BENNETT

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And again from her I have a very delightful note in which she mentions her pleasure at receiving a small fragment from the robe which Irving wore as Wolsey.

“ How can I thank you ? You have given me something that I value more deeply than I can express. It is dear and kind of you to have given it to me. I’ve had it put into a special box with a glass cover which I am going to have sealed up with a little inscription, written by Harry, saying it is a piece of the dress worn by his father as Cardinal Wolsey ; so it will not only give me pleasure and pride in its possession, but it will also belong to Prue, and will be always one of her greatest treasures.—VIOLET VANBRUGH.”

Rather a funny epistle came to me once from Arnold Bennett after I had written to ask him of the chance that a play of his which had not then been produced might suit Laurence Irving.

“ Many thanks for your letter of the 5th inst. which arrived to-day. The play in question is called *The Great Adventure*. One copy is in America and the other is out somewhere in the vague void. As soon as I get one of these back I will let you know. I heard from Frank Vernon that Laurence Irving had heard of the play from Dennis Eadie, and my impression was, and is, that Eadie had a copy of it. If so, he might hand it to Laurence Irving.

I always find that there are about a score of people in London who know more about my plays than I do myself. I write them, then they pass from me. I

shouldn't be at all surprised if *you* had a copy of that play, somewhere in a reticule. Our return to London shall be duly announced to you. Kindest regards from us both.

Yours sincerely,

ARNOLD BENNETT."

I always think one of the most amusing communications I had was from Barry Pain, though I have not the least recollection what I wrote to him about, yet I preserve his answer :

" Many thanks for your charming letter. I feel that it is a letter which should be answered wittily.

I have left the above blank space in case anything witty should occur to me at the last moment, even as the evening papers leave space for late news. If it perforce remains blank, please consider that though stupid I am grateful, and very glad that you liked my book.

Very truly yours,

BARRY PAIN."

Barry Pain should certainly have been paying me a royalty for years, and I have endeavoured without hope to point out to him his indebtedness, since all his most profitable books have boasted a heroine named " Eliza." Yet not a halfpenny of fees have I been able to extract from him, and secretly I am aware that his " Eliza " series is not amongst his favourites, and he is almost resentful of their obstinate longevity and the suggestion that he is best known as their parent.

It was after the Shakespeare Tercentenary performance which took place at Drury Lane when Sir Frank Benson was knighted by the King that I wrote congratulations to Sir George Alexander because he had been prime mover in the whole proceedings, really distinguished by general excellence.

I was thrilled by his reply, so faithful to the memory of Irving :

“ DEAR MRS. ARIA,

I am glad the thing touched you. I felt proud of my profession, of our men and women. It was all done by the actors, and if His spirit could see us, he will know what we aimed at.

Yours ever,

GEORGE ALEXANDER.”

I own amongst my possessions a little terra-cotta bust done by Onslow Ford as a preparatory study for the big statue of Irving as Hamlet, which now stands in the Guildhall. It had not been quite decided whether the figure should be bareheaded or possessed of a hat, and this shows Irving in a hat with battle-mented brim, which had fallen to some destruction ; when I told Sir Thomas Brock of my distress at this mishap, to my great joy he wrote to me :

“ I will with pleasure repair the little terra-cotta bust if you will send it round.”

If self-consciousness can be possessed of clay, how proud that little bust should feel to have been fashioned by Onslow Ford, R.A., and repaired by Sir Thos. Brock, K.C.B.

Another letter I cherish from Sir Thomas Brock reads :

“ DEAR MRS. ARIA,

I fully intended to ask you to pay a visit to the Queen Victoria Memorial before the scaffolding was removed, but the weather was so unfavourable that I felt sure you would not care to risk the chance of taking a severe chill. Even my clerk of works, tough as he is, succumbed, and had to keep to his bed for several weeks. Fortunately I escaped.

I am sending you these few lines to say that I shall be at the Memorial on Tuesday next at 12.30, and if you can spare time to call then, shall be delighted to walk round the work with you, and to hear what you think of it all.

Yours sincerely,

THOS. BROCK.”

Kindly Sir Thomas ! I am the richer through his generosity by a landscape painted in France by one of his sons, and a life-like presentment of his own fine head drawn by another.

At the time of the death of my sister Julia many wonderful letters came to me which I purposely suppress, but I gaze proudly at some lines by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes when referring to her last book, *Twilight*.

“ Not perhaps since Henry James gave us the inimitable *Daisy Miller* has modern fiction presented the character of a woman so sensitive, so innately innocent in her faults and weaknesses, so inevitably tragic in her fate as the heroine of this book, Margaret Capel.



SIR HENRY IRVING AS HAMLET

ONE OF THE FIRST STUDIES BY E. ONSLOW FORD, R.A.,
THE FINISHED STATUE BEING NOW IN THE GUILDHALL.

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It is the finest thing Frank Danby has done by all odds."

And another tribute from Arnold Bennett :

" She was a most stimulating and vital woman. I had much admiration for her. She had many facets upon which the light glinted. It is impossible that some day, sooner or later, her personality should not form the basis of a character in fiction."

I have often written in the *Daily Telegraph*, and have frequently been in a way connected with it, and I read now with some entertainment an old certificate of merit from headquarters which runs :

" The Hon. Mr. Lawson is very much pleased with Mrs. Aria's work and will be glad if she covers all the things she suggests, after of course due notice to Mr. Le Sage."

We do not exactly do these things now in newspaper land !

Besides affection with correspondence to prove it, I have collected substantial evidence that my unworthiness has been well rewarded. Do I not own the original of the silver casket all set with rubies and emeralds from which the stage carpenter at the Lyceum Theatre made copy to serve in the famous scene with Portia and her wooers ?

There was once a bereaved husband who resented the perpetual recollection of his wife, fostered by her personal belongings which were enshrined in their home.

" I can't forget her," he complained to his friend, " everything reminds me of her ; what shall I do ? "

The friend, who had the conscience of a dealer in works of art, replied relentlessly, with one business eye on a Sheraton bureau and another on a genuine "Tanagra":

"Sell the lot, obliterate all trace of her, that's the way, my boy."

But there is to me some special charm in being near the things which have been owned by those I loved. I like to touch the chairs they have touched, to look at the pictures they have treasured, and I gloried in the acquisition of the thick heavy silk which formed Irving's robe when he played Wolsey. It is of a bright cerise in corded quality and was specially woven and dyed for him in Italy. I am enriched also by the Carrickmacross flounce which Irving wore on the tunic when he played Cardinal Richelieu; and Walter secured for me the bandanna handkerchief he carried on the last occasion of his appearance in *The Bells*, a couple of nights before he died.

My Louis XV chandelier glowed down upon him, and the old Chinese embroidered *portière* upon which super-teethed dragons gleam at me with hair and tusks of thick golden thread, was once Irving's tablecloth in the Stratton Street dining-room, while he gave me a back view of a gleaming shoulder and golden head painted by Dudley Hardy because its gorgeous red drapery made righteous colour on my dark walls.

I have too the pearl and diamond pin which Queen Victoria presented to Irving on the occasion of his appearing at Windsor Castle in *Becket*, and in my sitting-room are disposed a dozen or more pieces of furniture and ornaments which I bought at the sale at Christie's, whence alack! his Dante bust departed for the States.

I have his enormous carved mirror into which I now cast my reflections of the past and the present, whilst I look beyond into a future when I may again meet, bereft of all weakness, those I have best beloved.

Ever I feel it monstrous for biographers of dead heroes to lay emphasis upon any physical infirmity which fate or age may have brought to them. I don't want to read that Gladstone in his senility whimpered for more butter on his bread. I resent being asked to consider Swinburne as an epileptic, Rossetti as abnormally thirsty, George Meredith as deaf, and Robert Louis Stevenson fighting hæmorrhage. Incurable sentimentalism this may be, but I would not have my eagles bereft of a single feather, and I am convinced no good purpose is served by the revelation of every ache and ailment which accompanied their flight to immortality.

No living writer ever spoke more tenderly of an illustrious dead than James Barrie when he wrote that little memorial pamphlet in honour of George Meredith. I can almost remember it without reference. The empty coach which rolled up to the graveyard, while the spirits of his heroes and heroines stood round the empty door at Box Hill. And the grey figure revived to youth, taking his trusty staff to stroll up the hill to be met at the top by Robert Louis Stevenson; a memorable fancy beautifully worthy of its inspiration.

On consideration I really believe that the two letters which I have received to excite most surprise from me came from Marie Lloyd and George Meredith. Ye gods! what a juxtaposition! and I hope that I am not placed thus under Meredith's ban, "Horribly will I haunt the man who dares to make a Memoir of me."

But ladies first, I must quote Marie Lloyd's note which came to me in reply to a request that I might publish her photograph in *The World of Dress*.

"Madam Aria has my permission to use my photo in her edition of *The World of Dress*.—MARIE LLOYD."

The note from George Meredith inspired by a like request :

"DEAR SIR,

I see no reason that my portrait should appear in your magazine.

GEORGE MEREDITH."

But this demand had been made during the time I was compiling *The May Book* in aid of the Charing Cross Hospital, with the generous assistance of William Heinemann.

The advisory board suggested it would add considerably to the volume if it were illustrated by portraits of every author and artist who had lent aid. The contents held many contributions from the most prominently worthy ; few had said "No," and my acquaintance with the notable had grown rapidly, to include Henry James, in these days a bearded Henry James, whom I had neighboured at a dinner-party. My first impression of the author of *What Maisie Knew* which I had just then finished reading, was definitely antagonistic, for he was denouncing actors and the theatre and the play-going public, induced to such blameful outlook by the reception given long ago to his play *Guy Domville*.

And although I knew he was perfectly right, yet the fine flower of my faith in the stage refused to fade

until I came under the sway of his eloquence whilst I hearkened to the perfect poetry of his language which illuminated at some length a sunset and a twilight in the Italy he loved. It was one of his smaller stories of Italy which he gave me the privilege to use in *The May Book*, where also I produced a poem by Sarah Grand, whom I knew at the time of her triumph with *The Heavenly Twins*; some forgotten criticisms of Edmund Kean by H. B. Irving, a fairy story by Evelyn Sharp, and many pictures from many famous artists.

I gained some insight into the joy of the prose writer when committing poetry; so many accredited in the one path wandered with pleasure into the other, and my chapters contained poems not only by George Meredith, but by Thomas Hardy, Israel Zangwill, Robert Hichens, Marie Corelli and Gilbert Parker, with the more legitimate song by John Davidson, whose *Ballad of a Nun* had made unforgettable mark upon my memory.

I had known John Davidson well, and the sad story of his troubles, and the saddest ending of them when off some wild coast of Cornwall he stepped into the deep waters of consolation.

Faithfully I have consulted Lady Wyndham as to whether the following extract from a letter from Sir Charles should appear, and she assures me she considers it would be most ungracious to ignore such words from such a man.

“ Did I ever tell you you were an angel. If not, and you did not see I felt it, you must have been lacking in discernment.—CHARLES WYNDHAM.”

How wrong of me to forget which special act of mine was thus commended ! but I suspect it had some connection with Miss Mary Moore, now regarded respectfully as his most admirable successor, as President of the Actors' Benevolent Fund, beneath whose gracious auspices I dined this year in the company of all that is brightest, best and most charitable in my favourite world of *the* profession.

CHAPTER XVII

ABOUT MYSELF AND MY FRIENDS

“**Y**OUR heart must be a very crowded thoroughfare,” calculated an American whilst he sat with me after I had rehearsed to him a few of these reminiscences which were then in preparation for their appearance.

I suspect that he was right, but I have confessed candidly to sentiment as my personal weakness, and it is as hard as unnecessary to deny the wide spread of my interest in much and many I deem fit for admiration. Why should I play the policeman and demand anyone who attracts me to “pass along, please”?

I have had my occasional lapses from the leisured many, having suffered a few super-laborious years when the finance see-saw landed me at up and down points, which I hope I concealed as I zealously endeavoured. I suppose though my success in this direction could not have been as absolute as I flattered myself, for one day in the long ago when I was in an omnibus and moved to pity at the exhausted, tired face of a poorly clad opposite neighbour, I tendered her a shilling with the suggestion that she might like something to drink, whilst I apologised with a kindly :

“You look rather done up.”

“Ah! yes,” she replied, wiping her hot face, “it’s ’ard work washing counterpanes, ain’t it?”

That "ain't it" was rather destructive to my vanity, but nevertheless gave me an excuse for smiling, never unacceptable to me.

Somehow I do not convey the right impression in a bus, and this was proved to me again last year after I had attended a pseudo-political meeting in the garden of Lord Leverhulme who had made special arrangements that public conveyances should duly remove all his friends, failing in their possession of motor-cars.

Plaining the dearth of taxis, I sat in a corner opposite to a rubicund-visaged gentleman from Yorkshire. He addressed me with all familiarity :

"I haven't been in London these three years, but you used to be able to get trains at Hampstead?"

I looked up at him with the alert interest which a stranger always excites in me, and I persisted :

"But I want a taxi."

"Well, mum," he said, drawing a red handkerchief over his damp head, "you're wrong, you should save your money, and buy a quart."

It has been suggested, by the way, that I over-act my part of laughing philosopher, but I have determined to remain unrepentant of my deep-rooted inclination towards mirth rather than towards melancholy.

Few jests escape my easy beam, but I refused even a glint when a callous victim to the cigarette habit declined to attend her aged stepmother's funeral because the graveyard bore the notice, "Smoking strictly prohibited." Death is no topic for merriment, however little missed may be the missing.

Ah ! me, my well-beloved family has dwindled to

two, and sternly forbidding myself the sad retrospect, I compare its record with that of the ten little nigger boys, and prophesy its end, "And then there was one."

Florrie, all unrebuked, may yet wear the mantle of authorship, though upon her shoulders it may prove super-ample, some youngster from her stock may arise labelled "for literature," to deplore in due and proper course the "awful tosh" his predecessors published.

However, I have enjoyed much, and can chronicle only now as abiding wants a pillar-box exactly opposite my house and a fine grandchild upon the top floor.

I labour less and always less, and gladly remember that happiness at this chance was a failing of my earliest youth, when at my busiest and most tired I would ask Julia to inscribe upon my tombstone, planned to be of the shape of a folded newspaper, a perversion of the old charwoman's epitaph :

" Weep for me not, weep for me never,
I'm going to write nothing for ever and ever."

Meanwhile I sit at my window in Regent's Park watching the rounded corner of the adjacent terrace for the gallant stride of Dorothea Irving, who comes almost daily from her house a few yards distant, to voice some fine scheme for the betterment of baby-land, upon which I advise as volubly as if I were amongst the initiated in all the mysteries of mothercraft.

Unless some luncheon party or matinée invites me to greater activity outside my gates, I pass my time in

embroidering frocks for the little ones and trimming hats for the girls, and I like to read all the newest books, determined to prefer them to the older ones, so that I may escape the accusation invariably hurled at the upholders of the past.

Of course I pretend to be much younger than I am, so that the already due announcement of my fifty-fifth birthday will be greeted by "Not really."

I am conscious that I am rapidly becoming amongst treats or penances to the younger generation, which does not even knock at my door but walks straight in, and I laugh that "kissing me is a national pastime almost as popular as football," while of course I am very proud the youngsters are not bored by me.

"Tommy, if you are not a good boy I shall put you into the Irving troupe," a poor distracted mother was heard to threaten whilst on board with Irving crossing over to New York.

Mothers and aunts and guardians amiably promise, "If you are a good boy or a good girl you shall have tea with Mrs. Aria during the holidays."

I am a place of entertainment, a point of pilgrimage like St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey or the Zoological Gardens, and I enjoy the fun of being so regarded, while I hope I keep up the righteous standard of supply of sweets, illustrated books and puzzles proper to the state of a universal great-aunt.

Which is the relationship I own actually to one sunny-faced Stephen, grandson of that sister Ellen I mentioned on my first pages, and I suspect him of heading straight for intellectual honours which may inscribe him on the family roll of fame. I know it is

amongst my pleasures to take him to the theatre, and although his shrieks of mirth at *Charley's Aunt* make the jolliest music to my ears, I recognise more proudly that some discrimination went to his comment on Macbeth.

"It's very well to blame Macbeth," he had said, wagging his golden head sagaciously, "but it was all Mrs. Macbeth's fault." Oh wise young judge!

Even while I enjoy the constant companionship of my devoted daughter, early widowed, and but now recovering from her too strenuous National Service, I am sometimes perplexed at the thought of the best employment for the remaining portion of my life, and some infallible means to satisfy my unquenchable desire to be amused—my low ambition to be amusing.

Perhaps as an act of grace after meals—I have had many splendid banquets of fun—I shall found a home for disillusioned diarists, who, having heard of the vast fortune acquired by Mrs. Asquith, have rushed headlong into reminiscences. I shall invite this miscreant-in-chief to subscribe, for I met her once at Downing Street when her brilliant young daughter, Elizabeth, Princess Bibesco, had in aid of some good cause recited "If," which was then an epidemic hard to avoid in any language at any entertainment, whilst a parody of it also afforded some opportunity for forbearance.

Mrs. Asquith and I had sat together to enjoy a cigarette whilst I took the opportunity of congratulating her, as the wife of a Prime Minister, on the courage and wisdom which had gone to her unpopular invitation to Poiret, king of the French world of dress, to

come over here to design and display clothes. During that period the *entente cordiale* was more preached than practised, but none can deny that individuality goes to the costumes of Mrs. Asquith, and that she never fails to look unlike others, which is, after all, a difficult task when no steamboat or airship arrives without a consignment of models from the other side; and there is perennial magic in the word model.

From a faithful follower comes just now a disturbing line: "I know your weaknesses, and I hear you are writing a book. I beseech you not to make it too benevolent."

How impossible that it should be otherwise! How can I write spitefully about my friends, and I never see my enemies if I recognise them, being unlike the Irishman who, after a bloodthirsty round with a fellow-citizen, was seen talking to him in Merrion Square.

"I thought you two were not on good terms," said a mutual acquaintance, to receive answer:

"I hate the fellow, but if I don't speak to him, how can I bust him?"

I plead guilty of a desire to annoy none, and in the spirit of Jack Horner who sat in the corner, convinced he was a very good boy, I gaze at the testimonial which accompanied an early Georgian knocker from Gertrude Kingston:

"To Elia"—thus she always flatters me to a kinship with Charles Lamb—"at whose door a friend has never called in vain, I dedicate this antique bronze ring."



HUGH WALPOLE

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How absurd in any case to feel unkind towards my intimates, whom I have chosen for the affection I bear for them, not for what they do but for what they are and what they mean to me.

But since I cannot bear to be contradicted, in order to secure some few whom I might reproach, I proffered a request to an elect group, that I should be supplied with a foreword to this book.

However, the attempt was not successful, but all alike sent me notes of satisfaction at hearing of my projected Memoirs—were they sinister notes on the lines of that prayer—"Oh that mine enemy would write a book!" Not a bit like it, I am convinced that they were one and all as sincere in their good wishes as they were obstinate in refraining from the privilege I proposed.

Hugh Walpole, for example, whose rare company and books I enjoy, and whose inscribed copy of *The Thirteen Travellers* I am proud to possess since it proclaims him my friend, failed brilliantly to acquiesce in my plan.

"DEAR MRS. ARIA,

I'm honoured indeed that you should ask me to write a preface to your memoirs. Honoured but surprised. I, one of the heaviest tiring sons of a parson, to write a foreword to what must be one of the lightest-footed, gayest-hearted and cynical-eyed records of our time. No, no, but thank you for asking me. I must be friskier than I had supposed.

Yours always,

HUGH WALPOLE."

Arnold Bennett gave me a less encouraging reply :

“ DEAR ELIZA ARIA,

Your letter catches me at the moment of leaving England. I should love to oblige you, but I have sworn off all forewords. Moreover, I think they do more harm than good. Moreover, your Memoirs will be so amusing, malicious and first-rate that they will require no aid. Excuse me.

Yours sincerely,

ARNOLD BENNETT.”

W. L. George is more hopeful in his :

“ There is an old saying that it is unwise to take coals to Newcastle ; an obvious parallel is that it is undesirable to take introductions to the introducer. You are so ideally fitted to introduce yourself, and you are so much more likely to make a good impression, that I will ask you to allow me to refuse to have anything to do with foisting you upon the public. I am sure that it will not resist this foisting, if it is wise . . . but hush ! This is beginning to turn into an introduction after all.”

H. G. Wells is characteristically flattering ; but I have already quoted his decision.

“ No prefaces, Darling. Beauty unadorned is adorned the most. Love.—H. G.”

I am of so amiable a spirit that I will forgive George Moore for an attitude which seemed to me at best to be unsympathetic. I will grant unto him the respect he desires, bowing to his objection to having his letters published in “ such a light narrative ” as mine. What a sweet spirit of forbearance do I display in my com-



ST. JOHN ERVINE

To face page 236



plete pardon of him, for his letters were quite discreet, and I have in my memory a suspicion that once he was not very keenly sensitive to the feelings of some distinguished in the ranks of literary Ireland.

I turn, however, with complete satisfaction from his peevish protests to the thought of that fellow-countryman of his, St. John Ervine, whom I might well envy the pointed pen which he digs into the sensitive nerves of all the worst actors and turns to rend mercilessly a few dramatists he may disapprove.

As a matter of fact he is one of the few dramatic critics I have known since Clement Scott died, who really likes his job. Most of the others condescend to it, yawning themselves in and out of their stalls, suffering their self-sought tasks sadly, never failing to mention the hurry of their dinner or the delay of their supper. William Archer and J. T. Grein may yet be marked enthusiasts.

But St. John Ervine frankly enjoys the theatre, deems it of high consequence, and is pleased to have chance to report well on it.

A very popular and beautiful actress who sometimes does her work very carelessly wrote to him reproaching him for the condemnation of her art in a clever play. She said she had a high position on the stage and was entitled to be treated with respect by him.

His reply was she would get his respect when she had earned it.

It was he who said of Mrs. Patrick Campbell's *Lady Macbeth*, when James K. Hackett revived this tragedy at the Aldwych, that "Mrs. Campbell must have stayed at home and sent Mrs. Cornwallis West in her place."

No one would have enjoyed this quip as much as

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who has a quaint sense of humour, and once in the long ago greeted me at the Savoy grill room :

“ Who are you, I know your face, but I cannot remember your name. Tell me your name.”

“ Absurd, I am the oldest inhabitant of the stalls, the lady Methuselah on the mat at the Box Offices, and as well known as the Tower of London.”

“ Well, if you won't say who you are I shall be sure you are Mrs. C. S., or Bloody Mary.”

But to continue the review of my personal surroundings, I am happy to own that it would be hard for me not to say something nice about Janet Courtney, wife of W. L., learned and accomplished lady, whom I admire for her tolerance of my frivolity, for her admirable eloquence and for her rare virtue of a whole-hearted sincerity, all inducing me to forgive her one vice, an inalienable attachment to a snorting Pekingese.

At least another two dozen would I add to my roll of good-fellowship, but it is obvious that I cannot enumerate all. Yet I would not omit Cunninghame Graham, whose grace of movement equals his grace of words, who looks like some old grandee, and bears upon him the indelible marks of race and culture ; nor can I forget Mrs. Theodore McKenna, whose kindness to those in trouble is proverbial.

Neither can I leave out beautiful Beatrice Hackett ; although but recently my friend, she is a most welcome one,

“ Who runs to help me when I'm ill,
And does my treasured vases fill ”

with the most beautiful flowers ; few indeed more beautiful than she herself, who owns a gentleness

of voice, a bloom of skin, a slenderness of ankle and wrist to gratify my senses with those rare furs and soft laces and full drooping feathers she usually affects.

Then I must add Mrs. Dummett, the best of hostesses, never tired of proving this at luncheons and tea-parties, which manage to entice the most worthy and entertaining, who inhabit the upper stratum of our ever dear Bohemia.

And I would chronicle amongst my "lookers-in" Gladys Unger, writer of plays, married to the Persian poet Ardarschir; she is a bright and clever creature, and amongst the few women dramatists who prosper; and Gladys Cooper, radiant figure, all too seldom present, since she lives persistently in the country, yet as a lover of sweetness and light I am glad she lives anywhere; or Amy Brandon Thomas, again a beautiful woman, and daughter of two old friends.

It would appear as I recall them that most of my friends have attained artistic success in some branch or another, even the soldiers and sailors I know bear some blushing or unblushing honour upon them, but neither the military nor the naval gent affects my company much, except perhaps Lieut.-Colonel H. D. Foulkes, who is an *habitué* here, as an old friend of my son-in-law. I never see him without visualising the romantic, almost Biblical, circumstance of his meeting with my daughter in Nigeria, where deeming her ill-nourished upon tinned food he sent her from the State where he ruled a whole flock of sheep and a lamb new born on their journey.

I shake my head again; it grows every moment more impracticable that idea that I should be malevolent. Away with it, and the counsel of imperfection which proposed it.

In what adverse spirit could I write of the two Vanbrughs. I now see them seldom, but I have known them for many years. My last meeting with Violet Vanbrugh was at the remarkable gathering of actors and actresses assembled at the opening of the theatre attached to the Dramatic Academy founded by Tree. The ceremony was well graced by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who dispensed his magnetic personal charm alike upon his speech and upon his subsequent converse with Ellen Terry and Lady Hare. It was upon that occasion that we had the first presentation of Sir James Barrie's one-act play, *Shall we Join the Ladies?* and what a good play it is! Here's to its extension, long overdue.

I have only met Sir James Barrie once or twice in my life. He has a very detached and silent manner, which makes me feel it would be very unseemly to interrupt his thoughts, and that he can sit quiescent during a rehearsal of his own work, I know, for I saw him thus unemployed, whilst H. B. Irving was rehearsing *The Professor's Love Story*, and Fay Compton, looking adorably pink and pretty, was enacting heroine, a task she undertook for Barrie triumphantly in *Mary Rose* and in *Quality Street*.

Sir Arthur W. Pinero, especially associated in my mind with Irene Vanbrugh, who scored so conspicuously in his *Gay Lord Quex*, *Letty*, and *His House in Order*, I have always secretly adored since the days when Irving, after his severe illness in Glasgow, was about to produce *Robespierre*. He wrote then offering him all his services at rehearsals, thinking thus to save Irving much fatigue.

I travelled recently with Irene Vanbrugh from the



CORNER OF FITZROY SQUARE.

SKETCHED FROM MY WINDOW BY C. R. W. NEVINSON.



river ways, when her arms were filled with dogs and eggs and flowers, all offered to me freely, and accepted gratefully *minus* the dogs.

Having shaken my head decidedly at the proposition to blame anybody I like, I may proceed gaily to pat them all on the shoulders with one pat more for Gerald Lawrence and his wife, the former having been Irving's leading man during his last years, and quite the best amateur chauffeur I gratefully entrust myself to, and the latter, Fay Davis, an excellent actress.

I threatened in my first chapter I could set down naught in malice, and I have come up to my estimate, and will again in record of two more appreciated friends "in the brush trade"; of Fred Stratton, who is spiritual and imaginative while varying his subjects from the kingdom of the Divine to a land of fairy fancies in sunlit woods, and C. R. W. Nevinson, who would come often to sit with me in my spacious flat in Fitzroy Square where I mischievously rejoiced if a not-quite-right omniscient looked round the walls up to the high ceiling to pronounce upon "the wonderful dignity attaching to the eighteenth-century work of the Adam Brothers."

The last time my sister Julia ever went out was to inspect that room which I had hung with black watered paper. Asking her opinion upon this as a background to gold-framed pictures, she smiled indulgently with, "I like it very much, it reminds me of court sticking plaster."

C. R. W. Nevinson loved that room, but he knew well it was not the work of Adam Bros. He knows most things in the world of art does "Richard," including the best method to introduce the catalogues of his

shows, and he approved the apartment thoroughly, mostly for a view it granted him of an opposite corner which undoubtedly did owe its existence to the Adam Bros. Here at the window he stood one day to do honour to a building he liked especially. I scarcely dare to reproduce his typical sketch, since I know him supremely exacting, and I am also aware that he did the thing for me just hurriedly in a few moments, when he was most amiably disposed. He is not always quite amiably disposed, has a grievance or so against international dealings, will denounce France as "the cocotte of Europe," and America as a "hag-ridden country of plumbers."

Yet C. R. W. Nevinson is a great favourite of mine, and I have much regard for his pretty wife, who looks like the daughter of some Norse king, very fearless in her glance, with pale hair and high cheek bones, and much activity to her movements.

Stephen McKenna is of the authors I regard affectionately, and I shall set him a little apart, as indeed he has set himself, in his courteous reply to my proposition that he should introduce this volume. But not only by reason of that is he set somewhat apart, his work is a little unlike that of other novelists by reason of its humour and its concentration on a dashing note of society peculiar to these times.

His Sonia and Barbara are creations and recreations.

Yet while I reflect seriously upon Stephen McKenna's special talent for presenting the ultra-modern girl, I rejoice that nothing of her goes to the making of my dear Elizabeth Irving, and I remember a letter from her father, written during a holiday time :



ELIZABETH IRVING

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“ Whenever I look at that child I am reminded of the beautiful things you have said of her, and that it is my duty to keep her worthy. Bless you.—H.”

Elizabeth is pre-eminently worthy of all things beautiful. Elizabeth, straight from school at the age of sixteen, tripped a dainty measure on the boards as Queen Titania, looking like the queen of all the fairies in the wide wide world of imagination. Elizabeth, a slim joyous creature with a yard of auburn hair, is now flirting with the films, with dreamful intervals of *Trilby* and more realistic adventure with the O.U.D.S. at Oxford as Margrete in *The Pretenders*. Perhaps she has a far-away vision of herself in the garb of Ophelia, but she does not talk about this while she sits on the arm of my chair in a more serious consideration of the importance of dancing, and the charms of fashion, now and again showing me glimpses of her higher ideals of life, giving echo of those dreams spelt for her in the heart of her adored and adoring father.

But my youngest friend of all is Pamela Mary Irving, daughter of Laurence and Rosalind Irving, splendid example of the race to come ! Opposite the old mill she lies now in the garden of a thousand roses, crooning in her perambulator at the apple blossoms on the old tree, beneath which H. B. Irving and I have so often sat to talk of his father, whilst we watched the mustering of the boats below in the Harbour Bay of Whitstable.



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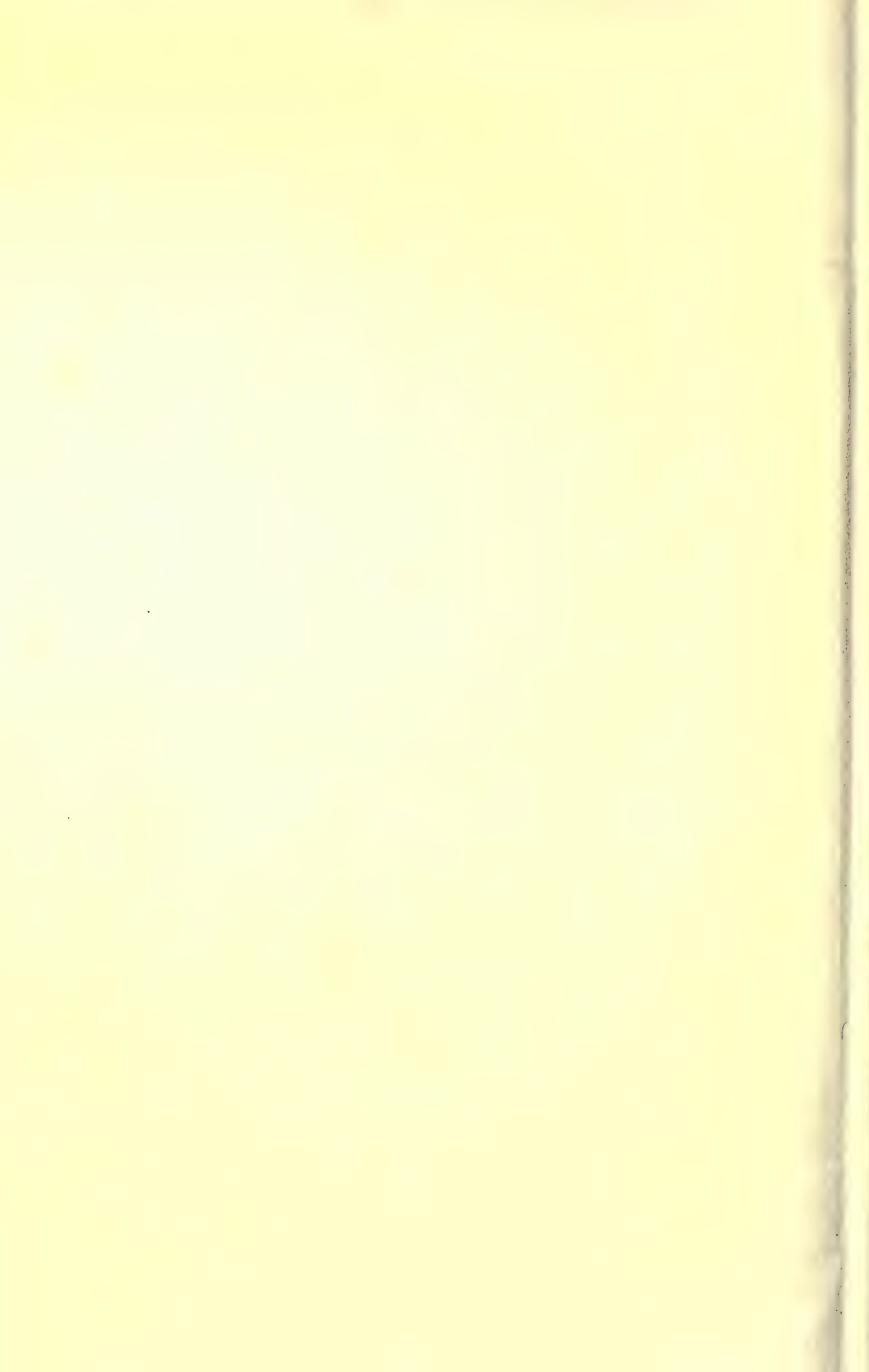
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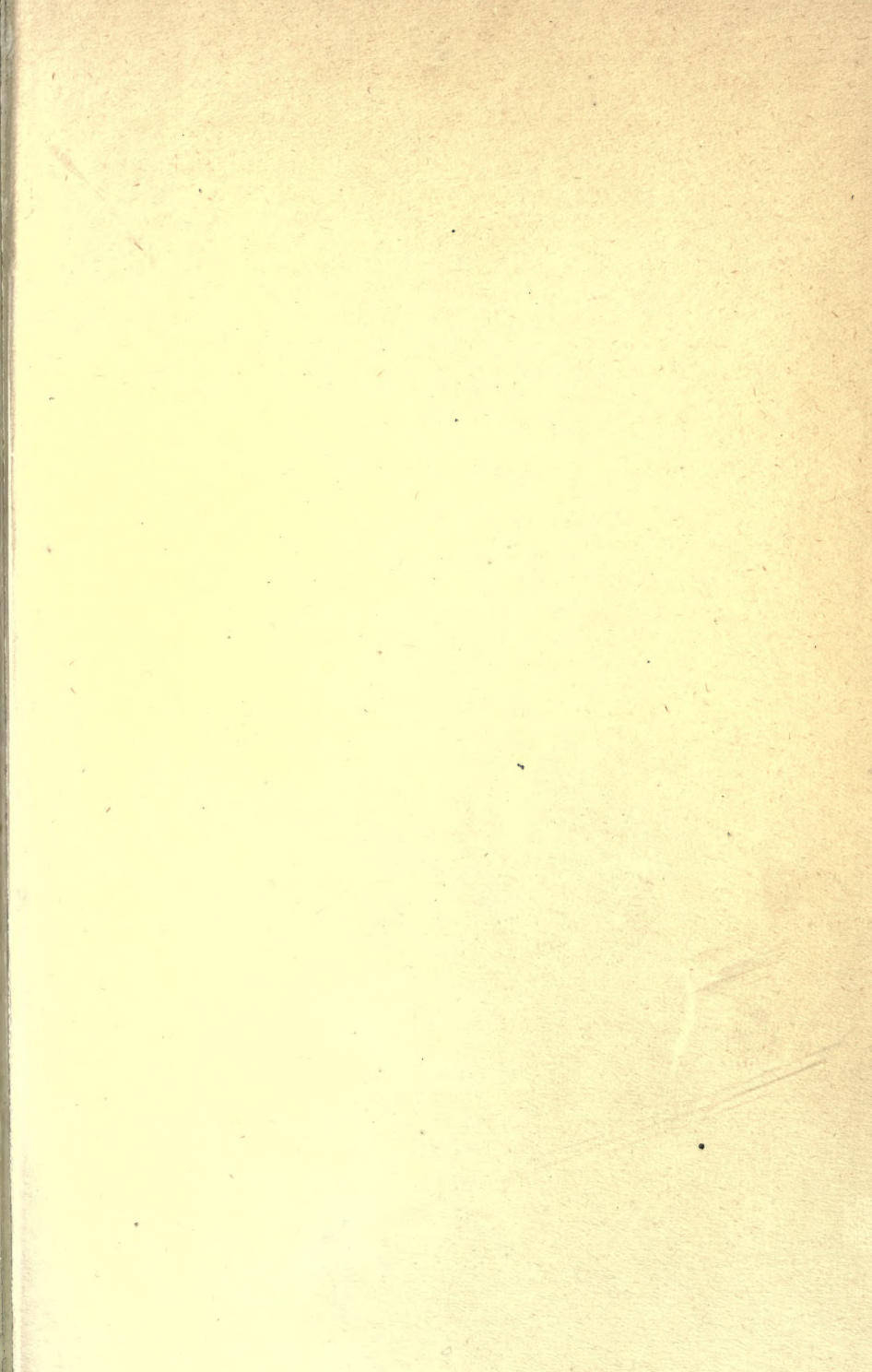
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